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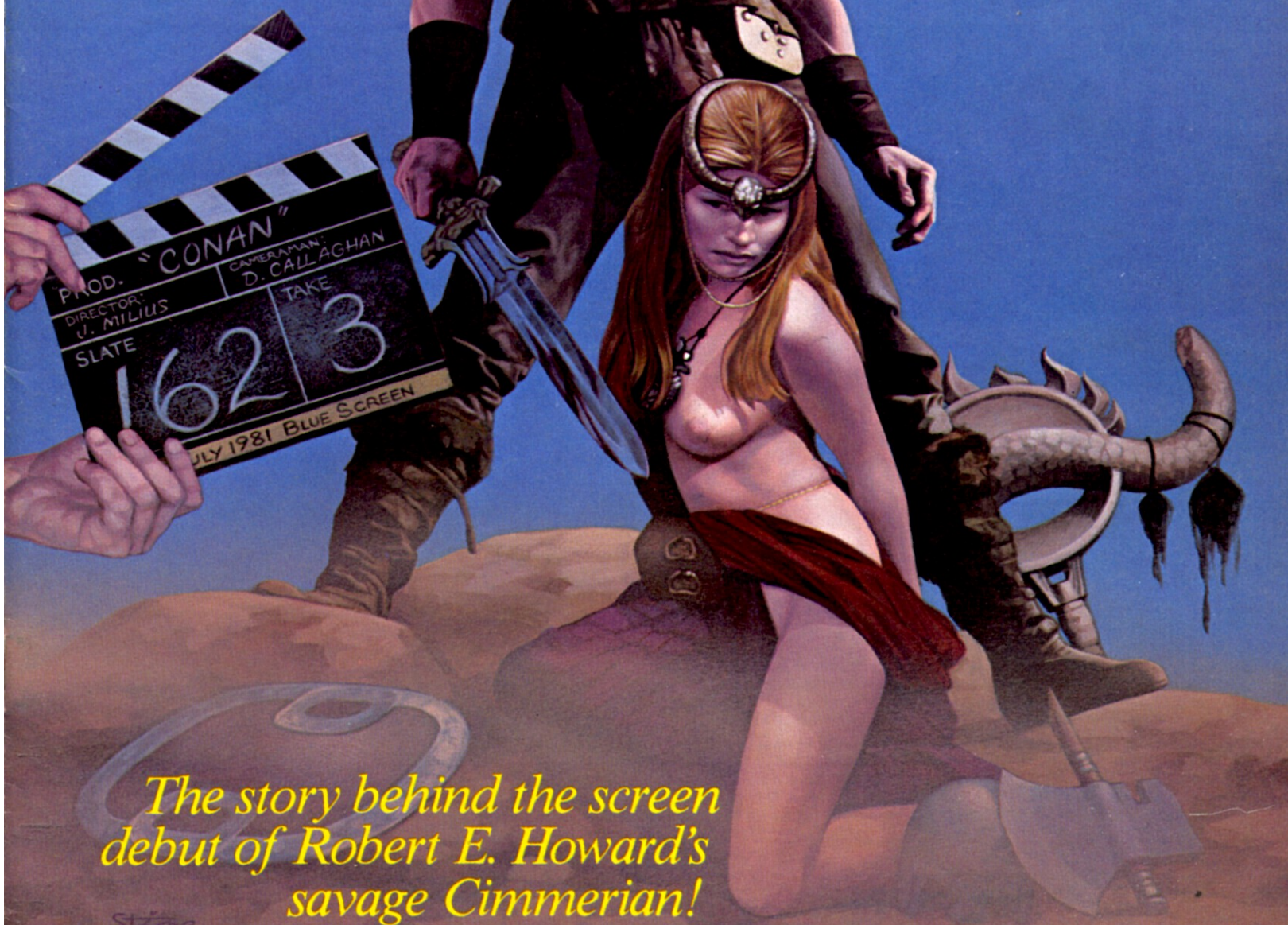
Volume 11 Number 3

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CONAN

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VOLUME 11 NUMBER 3

The magazine

with a "Sense of Wonder."

SEPTEMBER, 1981

What a great summer for the genre! In more than twenty years of seeking out every horror, fantasy and science fiction film that opens, never have I seen so many films in so short a time. With something new opening practically every week, the flops don't seem nearly as significant as before, though there are certainly as many or more of them.

Quantity alone wouldn't matter if it was all bad, but the quality of some summer fare also has been high. Although it's still too early to name the big winners in terms of dollars earned, it's safe to say the fear of a boxoffice Waterloo for the genre due to overexposure won't materialize this summer. If anything, attendance is higher than expected, with the genre capturing the lion's share. The public is far from saturated with horror, fantasy and science fiction. The boom continues.

Unfortunately, it's still heading in the same direction as LOGAN'S RUN, the big, dumb, empty-headed science fiction film that started the current boom back in 1976. As a rule, the summer movies can be characterized by their paucity of drama, human emotion and ideas. These films are, for the most part, mechanical, formulaic exercises in action, adventure and (not so) cheap thrills.

"Great!" you say? "Those are my kind of movies."

Well, they're my kind of movies too. Anyone should be able to jump on the RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK express and go along for the ride just for the fun of it. But I think film should engage the spirit and the mind as well as the viscera. While I get a wallop out of seeing FOR YOUR EYES ONLY, the best Bond in 12 years, I also crave to see a genre film with the kind of serious emotional charge of Alan Alda's THE FOUR SEASONS, which also, incidentally, has patrons lining up around the block.

Lightweight comedy, action and adventure is fine, but when that's all there is, it points up not so much the commercial demands of the marketplace, but the intellectual and artistic bankruptcy of the filmmaking community.

The movies are turning into as vast a wasteland as television ever was.

Frederick S. Clarke



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AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON

Can John Landis and Rick Baker top THE HOWLING?

By Jordan R. Fox

For makeup artist Rick Baker, AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON was challenge enough. His major assignment from director John Landis—to create a believable, on-screen werewolf transformation—was no small task. But Baker also must have had to contend with a constant, nagging doubt: could he top THE HOWLING? Rob Bottin's transformation makeup for that film got rave reviews when it hit the screens in April. Those effects were based on principles Bottin learned from his mentor, Baker. Now it was incumbent on the teacher to surpass his student. According to Baker, he's done it.

"Our shape-altering mechanisms are more sophisticated than Rob's," said Baker. "Remember, I didn't tell Rob *everything*. The concept is similar, but some of the materials and processes we used are different. Our werewolf transformation is a lot quicker and more complete. We don't have the usual kind of horror movie lighting. The effect is very clearly seen, because it happens in a brightly lit room with nothing obscured. That's much more critical and de-

manding of our work."

The differences between the effects of AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON and THE HOWLING seem to be those of degree. For example, rather than Bottin's stiletto nail trick, Baker shows a hand deform and elongate in one shot, then sprout wolf claws that look quite functional in another. Beyond the "Change-O Heads" in THE HOWLING, the operative phrase for AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON is "Change-O *Everything*"; every body part of Baker's werewolf undergoes changes that are more detailed and polished than those in the earlier film.

Details about the end result—a big wolf creature that walks on all fours—are being kept under a tight lid by Landis, so Baker is unable to discuss the creature. "John would kill me . . . But it's different than what you've seen before," said Baker. The question is, will it be different enough to startle audiences who have already seen THE HOWLING?

Landis wrapped filming of AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON in April and began sneak previewing the finished \$10 million Polygram production at the end of



David Naughton in the midst of makeup artist Rick Baker's werewolf transformation. Director John Landis chose to film the effects in full view under natural light.



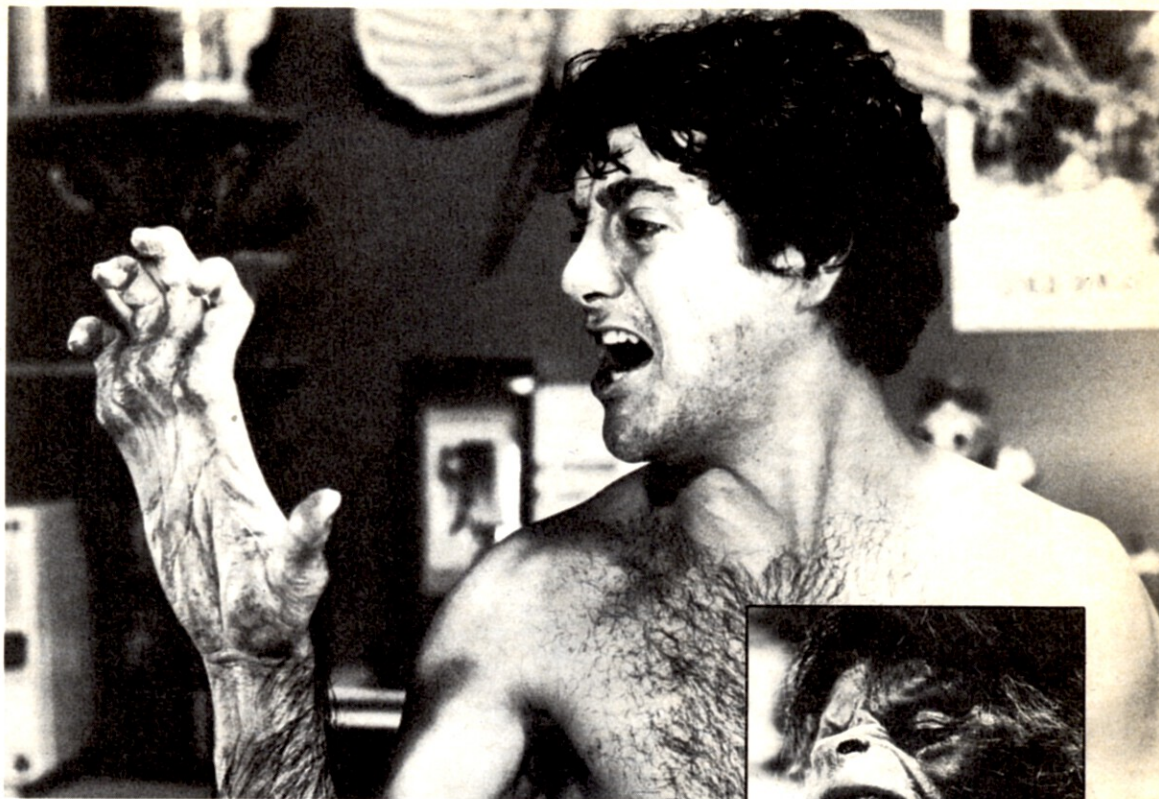
June in preparation for a nationwide release by Universal Pictures on August 21. The film was shot at London's tiny Twickenham studio, which has only two stages.

Newcomer David Naughton (the black-vested hooper in the Dr. Pepper commercials) co-stars with Jenny Agutter (LOGAN'S RUN). Naughton plays a young American who, while traveling with a friend in Wales, is attacked by a wolf. The friend is killed, and Naughton's character wakes up in the hospital to the tender ministrations of the nurse played by Agutter.

The script called for a fair amount of stunt work, and some of it had to be accomplished under unusual conditions. Agutter, a one-time British citizen, explained, "In England, the police will not help filming, and they will not close the street. They said, 'If you can clear the street in three minutes, fine. If not, we'll arrest you and take you off to jail, because you are obstructing traffic.' They were very impressed when we actually did a major crash in the middle of Picadilly Circus and cleared it within three minutes." (Ironically, that crash, involving a double-decker bus, was edited out of the picture.)

Supposedly, the film Landis envisioned in 1972 (while making SCHLOCK with Baker and AMERICAN WEREWOLF producer George Fosley, Jr.) differs little from the film he eventually got to make. What seems to have made the biggest difference over the last ten years, not counting the helpful smash success of Landis' ANIMAL HOUSE, are the great strides that have been made in makeup technology. And Rick Baker has been a major figure at the forefront of those innovations.

Far Left: Makeup artist Rick Baker touches up the mechanized puppet used for the final appearance of Griffin Dunne, who comes back from the grave to visit his friend, werewolf David Naughton, three times in the picture. Baker applied the first two makeup stages on the actor: the first stage (near left & below) shows the effects of Dunne's encounter with a werewolf. The second stage (right) begins to show the signs of decomposition.



Above: David Naughton watches in horror as his hand elongates into a paw as the transformation begins. Inset: Naughton's face begins to alter as he changes into a four-legged wolf.

Baker's work on AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON marked the debut of his new makeup effects company, EFX Inc., the nucleus of which formed to develop concepts later aborted for Steven Spielberg's NIGHT SKIES project (11:1:7). Baker's staff for AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON included Kevin Brennan, Steve Johnson and Shawn McEnroe, who were part of Rob Bottin's crew on THE HOWLING. Bill Sturgeon and Doug Beswick worked on effects mechanisms. Tom Hester supplied conceptual artwork and Baker's wife and long-time assistant Elaine Baker served as the company's foam latex technician.

Baker said he feels that a full, no-cut werewolf transformation—even if feasible, and no matter how convincing—would be dramatically boring,

and in that he is very much in agreement with THE HOWLING's director Joe Dante. Baker's major transformation for AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON was among the last scenes filmed. Naughton's makeup for the latter stages of his metamorphosis took a marathon ten hours to apply, close to a record for Baker. "The set would be all lit and ready by the time we were done," said Baker. "Then we'd pop off a couple of shots, and that was it for the day."

Baker tried to keep a good distance from any mention of the word "puppet," but it's evident that a highly developed form of mechanized puppetry has become an essential technique for this kind of film. The one example Baker did concede is a rather gruesome appearance by Griffin Dunne, the film's first victim. "Watching the old zombie movies as a kid," recalled Baker, "I'd always wonder why they just used dark makeup around the eyes. These people are dead! I always wanted to animate some really dead people—walking skeletons almost."

No gore makeup could do the job. A sophisticated puppet was constructed, based on a life-cast of Dunne, to get the effect of the actor's skull covered with bits of rotting, shriveled muscle and skin. Though Stan Winston developed a similar effect first for DEAD AND BURIED, Baker is satisfied that the EFX creation is far superior. Dunne's rotting corpse, moving about and speaking lip-sync dialogue, is a recurring character that must withstand the scrutiny of much longer screen time. For reasons of time and money, cable and lever action mechanics, with some pneumatics also, were used for such effects, rather than the more elaborate Anatomation process Baker developed for NIGHT SKIES.

Baker really doesn't like doing gore makeups, though in his career he has found them hard to avoid. What he is interested in is the creation of characters through makeup effects. With the industry slowed by the protracted writers' strike and the possibility of a directors' strike, Baker has made tentative plans to film a test reel showcasing his Anatomation process with "sword & sorcery" characters that clearly could not be achieved by actors in makeup. In Baker's Anatomation process, an electro-mechanical character is made to duplicate the movements of its offscreen operator. "What we can do with the process is pretty amazing," said Baker.

Fortune seems to have smiled upon Baker and his crew on AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON. There were no problems occasioned by the EFX shop in Hollywood having to supply the London-based Baker long distance; nothing that they built for the film broke down during production; and, despite the fact its negative cost is five times greater, all of the film's makeup effects were brought in for a cost not much larger than the effects budget of THE HOWLING. □



COMING

SOMETHING BRADBURY THIS WAY COMES

Suddenly, Ray Bradbury is hot—red hot—and three productions are on the boards to prove it

By Bill Kelley & Glenn Lovell

After several false starts dating back more than a decade, Ray Bradbury's horror novel, *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES*, will finally begin shooting this fall. The adaptation, produced by Walt Disney Productions from Bradbury's own screenplay, will be directed by Jack Clayton—who was supposed to direct it when the project was at Paramount Pictures five years ago. In addition, the author has announced that he will resume scripting 20th Century Fox's sequel to *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL* once the Writers Guild strike is settled.

Bradbury, currently in one of the busiest periods of his career, explained that the Disney organization approached him after reaching an agreement with Kirk Douglas, whose production company holds the rights to *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES*. "They're changing their image somewhat—or trying to—as we all know," said the 59-year-old author, "and they came to me and said, 'We need a hit.' They're working from my screenplay and I will have a creative say in the production. I expect they'll start shooting in October."

The film is being produced by Peter Vincent Douglas, Kirk's son, who also produced *THE FINAL COUNTDOWN*. Bradbury said he could not estimate the picture's cost, but noted that Paramount had proposed an \$8 million budget five years ago; he indicated it would probably cost twice that figure to produce the film today. [According to trade reports, the film is budgeted by Disney at about \$10 million.]

The story is set in the midwest (the locale of Bradbury's youth, and a favorite backdrop for his tales of earthbound fantasy), and concerns the bizarre events which follow the arrival of a traveling carnival in a small town. Its central figures are two 13-year-old boys and a sinister, yet charismatic, creep-show entrepreneur, Mr. Dark.

In 1964, Bradbury autographed a first edition copy of the novel to Christopher Lee with the inscrip-



Ray Bradbury during a recent publicity stint for his friend, Ray Harryhausen.

tion: "To Christopher Lee, who *IS* Mr. Dark!" But it now appears that Lee definitely will not be playing the role for which few would argue he is physically perfect.

"I love Christopher and I've known him for years," Bradbury offered, "but he's done that kind of role so many times now that it would hurt the film. People would say, 'Oh, it's just another horror film,' and it's much more than that. It's really a shame, too, because at one time he would have been perfect for it."

Asked, then, who he would like to

see as Mr. Dark, Bradbury replied, "Well, Peter O'Toole, if he's in good shape. He's never done a part like that. But he certainly has the power and magnetism. I think he'd be great, a real surprise."

Those who have followed the convoluted production history of *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES* may recall that Steven Spielberg proclaimed it as *his* next project after *CE3K* (at a time when the rights were reportedly out of Douglas' hands for a brief period). But the project never came off, and Bradbury recalled the scuttled collaboration with bitter disillusionment.

"He's not a nice man," said Bradbury, describing Spielberg. "He just vanished over the horizon. When I saw him after *CE3K*, he asked, 'How do you like your film?' I said, 'What do you mean?' and he told me, 'Without you and your story, *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE*, it never would have been made.' I can't really be angry, but it's a shocking shame. He would have been perfect for the film. Visually, he is Bradbury; he is my spiritual son."

Bradbury's screenplay for *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES* was written several years ago. Of his more recent efforts, the

most significant is undoubtedly *THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL*, a sequel which is expected to retain the title of the original, 1951 Robert Wise classic.

"I was contacted by Renee Valente, a producer at Fox, and they screened the original black & white film for me," said Bradbury. "I told them, 'It holds up fine. Why don't you just re-release it in 70mm with Dolby Stereo? You don't need a remake.' So I'm writing a sequel."

Bradbury professed a "deep respect" for the Wise film, and remarked that he has even read the pulp story on which it was based. ("Yeah, *Farewell to the Master*. I read it when it came out and liked it then, but that was 40 years ago, of course.")

"My story has a beginning and an end," Bradbury remarked, "but I'm still brooding over the middle, so the writers' strike has given me some time to get away from it. But basically, the story is set 30 years later, and if you remember the earlier film, Klaatu left with a warning that if we didn't adopt the ways of peace and brotherhood, and stop threatening the safety of the rest of the universe, he would return. Well, we obviously haven't learned our lesson, so the ship comes back and lands in the Vehicle Assembly Building at Cape Canaveral—a huge, beautiful, cathedral-like place. Klaatu is dead, and lying in state inside the ship, and Klaatu's daughter steps out. The story moves on from there."

"I think I've got a terrific ending," chuckled Bradbury, "but we won't go into that. It all takes place between Christmas and New Year's, so it's like the dawning of a new era. The hero is the little boy from the first film, Patricia Neal's son, played by Billy Gray. I'd love to get him, if he's around and can still act at all. I'd love to get Patricia Neal, too."

"I'm pretty excited about it," he added. "Renee isn't a typical producer. She seems to understand me."

Bradbury's experience with Valente and Fox is evidently in sharp contrast to his relationship with NBC Entertainment, which radically reworked his teleplay for *THE ELECTRIC GRANDMOTHER*, a "Project Peacock" children's special slated to air in mid-fall. (The teleplay is an adaptation of Bradbury's own *I Sing The Body Electric*.)

"They changed a number of things to make it more cheaply," said Bradbury, "to the degree that I'm afraid it won't have much of the spirit of the story I tried to tell."

Bradbury indicated he is sympathetic to the limited budgets and tight shooting schedules of television, but added, "You write a thing a certain way to get a mood. If a scene is set at night, and you film it at high noon, you're obviously not going to get the right atmosphere. It's like trying to film *MOBY DICK* in the middle of the Mojave Desert." □

Casting possibilities for the pivotal character of Mr. Dark in Bradbury's *SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES* include actors Peter O'Toole (left) seen here in *THE STUNT MAN*, and Christopher Lee (right) seen as Lord Summerisle in *THE WICKER MAN*. Though Lee is perfect for the part, after years of typecasting in horror roles, he now suffers from a sort of reverse prejudice that denies him top genre parts.



MAMA DRACULA

The family that slays together, stays together in B. Szulzinger's Belgian vampire parody.

By Frederic Albert Levy

In a world so corrupt that virgins are rarer than blue moons, Mama Dracula (Louise Fletcher) brings brilliant young Professor Van Bloed (Jimmy Shuman) to her Transylvanian castle, where she gives him unlimited funds to carry out his murderous research on artificial blood. She is assisted in her nefarious scheme by her twin vampire sons (Belgian comics Marc-Henri and Alexandre Wajnberg). But Nancy Hawai (Maria Schneider), a sort of female Van Helsing, sets out to stop her.

So begins MAMA DRACULA, Belgian producer/director Boris Szulzinger's newest film. Six years ago, Szulzinger teamed up with animator Jean-Paul Picha to make SHAME OF THE JUNGLE (a.k.a. JUNGLE BURGER in England), a Tarzan parody that played briefly in the United States. Now the two have gone their separate ways, Picha busy on a second animated feature called

THE MISSING LINK, Szulzinger filming a story with live—or rather, undead—characters.

"I didn't think of the Mama Dracula character first," said Szulzinger in a recent interview in Paris. "I had been fiddling for a while with the idea of making something based on the Dracula myth, when, out of the blue, I had the vision of two Draculas instead of one. I thought the traditional first appearance of the Count in the castle would be much funnier if it was duplicated."

From the concept of twin Draculas the focus of the film shifted to their mother: Mama Dracula. "There have been many films on Countess Bathory [the historical 17th century "vampire" who bathed in the blood of virgins to preserve her beauty], but the character of Dracula's mother has never appeared so far," explained Szulzinger.

Mama Dracula differs from some fictional vampires in that—far from looking for death to free herself—she



Louise Fletcher (right) as Mama Dracula, wins over nemesis Maria Schneider.

is frantically out for life and eternal beauty. Szulzinger believes such a search is uniquely female. As a result, the film's female Van Helsing ultimately joins forces with Mama Dracula in her search for immortality. To underscore this feminine connection, Szulzinger dismissed traditional Gothic sets and opted for rounded Art Nouveau decors. Location shooting was done in Brussels, both

because of that city's appropriate architecture and for the financial aid provided by the helpful Belgian government.

As a producer, Szulzinger always keeps in mind that the United States represents 60% of the world film market. Unless he wanted MAMA DRACULA confined to the narrow frontiers of Belgium, Szulzinger realized he needed an American actress to play the title role. He chose Louise Fletcher ("She is not a superstar, but what Americans call a 'well-respected' actress") and shot the whole film in English ("a language whose musicality is essential to this type of film"). Most of the cast, Fletcher especially, were drilled in their Transylvanian accents by listening again and again to tapes of Bela Lugosi.

As to whether the film itself will have Mama Dracula's vitality is another question. Maria Schneider, whom Szulzinger claimed originally looked forward to doing the film, has already made it clear in the press she is very disappointed with the final result. MAMA DRACULA has been released only in France so far to mediocre response. It has to wait for its general European release, then its American presentation, before an accurate appraisal can be made of its longevity. □

Left: The Wajnberg brothers as Mama Dracula's twin sons. Since they cast no reflection, they act as a mirror for each other. Right: Another virgin falls victim to Professor Van Bloed (Jimmy Shulman) as he seeks to develop artificial blood for Mama.



POLTERGEIST: IS SPIELBERG "GHOST DIRECTING" FOR TOBE HOOPER?

POLTERGEIST, a \$15 million dollar "science-horror" film, began filming on a closed MGM set on June 10. The film is being directed by Tobe Hooper, apparently under the very watchful eye of executive producer Steven Spielberg. While no one involved is willing to go on the record, several high-ranking production personnel have confirmed rumors that on the basis of Hooper's first few days of filming, Spielberg all but took over the directorial reins.

As one crew member explained: "Let's say that over the years, the title of executive producer has become less active in regard to the actual on-set shooting. Steven's

producership on this will be very active, very integral and *definitely* not just a little."

According to on-set visitors, Hooper (who is reportedly earning \$500,000 for the film) has let Spielberg do most of the preparatory work for each shot, stepping forward only at the last moment to assume control. Spielberg's on-set presence is not expected to last for POLTERGEIST's entire 12-week shooting schedule, and Hooper will almost certainly receive sole directorial credit.

The storyline of POLTERGEIST is being kept under wraps, although it's reported as being both scary and funny. Roy Arbogast is special

effects consultant on the project, and postproduction work will be handled by Richard Edlund's crew at Lucasfilm's Industrial Light & Magic. Craig Reardon (who also worked with Hooper on FUNHOUSE) is supervising the make-up effects for the film's many supernatural manifestations.

The film stars Jobeth Williams (the girlfriend in KRAMER VS. KRAMER), Craig T. Nelson, and Academy Award-winner Beatrice Straight. The Spielberg-Hooper relationship on POLTERGEIST could turn out to be the most intriguing since the Howard Hawks-Christian Nyby team-up on THE THING □

CLUE will be John Landis' next film for Universal, produced by John Carpenter's long-time collaborator Debra Hill. British playwright Alan Ayckbourn has scripted from Hill's original treatment based on the Parker Bros. detective game. "We're thinking of giving movie patrons scratchpads to play armchair detective while watching the film," said Hill. "We'd love to shoot several endings, but I don't think Universal will go for that!" Ayckbourn is developing his script for a try-out on the London stage first, in which gimmicks—like having the audience roll dice to pick from several culprits—will be given a dry run. □

TOTAL RECALL: SHUSETT, O'BANNON SET ON BIG-BUDGET DISNEY EPIC

Despite critical and public indifference to its more "mature" films, Walt Disney Productions is going ahead on plans to produce at least three major science fiction films during the next 18 months, including adaptations of a Ray Bradbury

Ron Shusett



novel (see page 8) and a Philip K. Dick short story.

The most ambitious of the new projects is the \$20 million **TOTAL RECALL**. Co-authored by Ronald Shusett and Dan O'Bannon (who collaborated on

ALIEN and this summer's poorly-received gore film, **DEAD & BURIED**), the film is based on Philip K. Dick's *I Can Remember It For You Wholesale*. Shooting is set to begin in January, 1982. Neither director nor cast have been announced.

"Dan and I feel it's the best thing we've ever done," said Shusett, who will also produce. "We feel it's better than **ALIEN**."

Dick's short story is set on Earth, at a time when men also live and work on Mars. His protagonist is a simple man who yearns for a life of adventure, and purchases an artificially-induced memory (from a company called "Total Recall") that will leave him convinced he

has traveled to Mars as a spy. But the procedure to plant the memory reveals that the man was a spy on Mars years earlier, and that his real memory had been erased.

Shusett and O'Bannon will use the short story as a preface of sorts, setting the bulk of the film on Mars, showing audiences events only vaguely referred to in the original story. The large budget will be used to create the Martian milieu, said to be similar to seedy film noir locales. It's expected full-size sets will be extensively enhanced with matte paintings and miniatures. Pre-production design is being handled in part by Dario Campanile, a surrealistic painter new to film design,

who painted the striking poster art for **DEAD & BURIED**.

Also in the works from Disney is the \$10 million production of **TRON**, which will feature the first extensive use of computer animation in a feature film. Animator Steve Lisberger wrote the screenplay and will make his directorial debut on the project, which was originally conceived with conventional animation in mind. Special effects are being handled by Richard Taylor, who pioneered computer graphics for television with his firm, Information International Inc.; and Disney matte artist Harrison Ellenshaw. A summer 1982 release is anticipated. □

CONTAMINATION

What can you say about a cheap ALIEN rip-off with James Bond overtones? 'At'sa Italian!

By Frederic Albert Levy

In Latin, *contaminatio* is the name of a specific literary genre referring to "new" plays that are the cross-fertilized progeny of older plays. Recently, Cannon Films picked up for U.S. distribution the appropriately titled **CONTAMINATION**, which, under the evidently reluctant direction of Luigi Cozzi (helmer of **STARCRASH** under the alias "Lewis Coates") robs from both **ALIEN** and various James Bond films. While you can sometimes admire a theft for its audacity, **CONTAMINATION** proves that, for the most part, crime does not pay.

"What can I do?" says Cozzi. "In Italy, when you bring a script to a producer, the first question he asks is not 'What is your film like?' but 'What film is your film like?' That's the way it is in Italy, we can only make **ZOMBIE II**, never **ZOMBIE I**. To tell the truth, that's the way it is throughout the film industry; when I contacted some American producers after the success of **STARCRASH** and offered them quite a few projects, they were only interested in making **STARCRASH II**."

Admits Cozzi, "I made **CONTAMINATION** just because I said to a producer, 'What about **ALIEN II**?' I think the film was totally pre-sold on the basis of the title and a poster!"

The history of Cozzi's new film would make a good comedy itself. The script's original title was **ALIEN ARRIVES ON EARTH**, but it had to be dropped in pre-production when another Italian quickie called **ALIEN II ON EARTH** rushed into release.

Cozzi's producer, seeking a new title to grace the film, was struck by inspiration. Adorning the wall of his office was a poster for an aborted project entitled **CONTAMINATION: ATOMIC PROJECT**—this ripoff of **THE CHINA SYNDROME** was to have been directed by Lucio Fulci. Never one to let a title go to waste, the

producer decided that Cozzi's film would inherit it. "A very bad title," says Cozzi, "largely accounting for the poor response to the film in Italy, totally inadequate for what should have been advertised as a monster film."

CONTAMINATION takes up where **ALIEN** left off, or near enough. Set in the year 1989, a mesmerized astronaut returns from Mars and sets

up shop in a coffee factory. The factory is actually a huge hatchery from where the astronaut proceeds to distribute those sinister Alien eggs all over the world.

Says Cozzi, "But the producer did not only want an **ALIEN** imitation—as a matter of fact, he hates science fiction and hadn't even seen **ALIEN**—he also demanded that I do it like a James Bond film!"

Luigi Cozzi (left) directs the alien egg hatchery in a coffee warehouse owned by one of the producers. The eggs are—you guessed it—painted balloons.



"I had to do it!" he says.

Cozzi says he actually enjoys working under such conditions, because he regards lifting scenes and dialogue from other films as a game. "I try to build a puzzle of quotes," he says. Film buffs who see **CONTAMINATION** will recognize borrowings from **THEM**, **QUATERMASS II** and **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS**. There's even a joke reference to the **PSYCHO** shower scene, with a two-foot egg standing in for Norman Bates.

CONTAMINATION was shot on a tight six-week schedule with a modest \$800,000 budget. A few days of filming were done in New York, but most of the location exteriors were lensed in a Columbian coffee factory owned by one of the film's producers.

The film got made primarily because Cozzi promised his producers he could duplicate the **ALIEN** chest-bursting effect on the cheap, a promise he delivered by having compressed air blow up fake stomachs worn by the actors. The current print seems to be bloody enough as it is, but Cozzi has shot additional footage, featuring details like exploding hands, for the American version of the film. As for the eggs, most were just balloons painted yellow-green; exploding eggs were made of silicone and blown up with compressed air.

Has Cozzi's enthusiasm for filmmaking been dampened by the stupidity of producers? "Well, I have become cynical, and I won't work again if I don't see the money first. These people are very good at having you work for a month without paying you in the end. I could not live on what I earn as a film director."

In any case, Cozzi vows he won't make a **STARCRASH II**. His current writing projects include a space film based on Biblical myths and a science fiction treatment of the old But Lancaster swashbuckler **THE CRIMSON PIRATE**. □

WES CRAVEN'S DEADLY BLESSING

The director of *LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT* mellows with his move to the majors. "I'm no longer the hardcore maniac of violence."

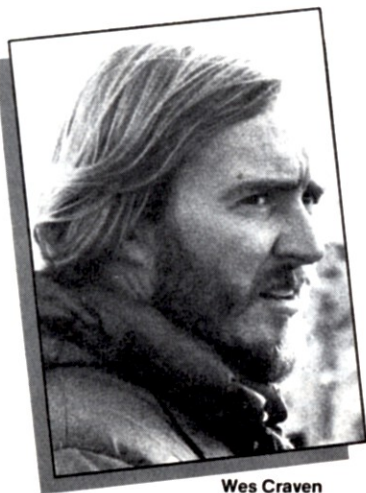
By Stephen Rebello

The professorial-looking and articulate Wes Craven, the director who unleashed *LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT* and *THE HILLS HAVE EYES*, might seem a disappointment to anyone anticipating a wild-eyed Manson-type who exorcises his hostilities through on-screen carnage. Craven comments, almost inaudibly, on his blood-stained reputation: "It's taken almost ten years for some audiences and critics to see what I was intending when I made those films. I've stopped thinking in terms of what my movies and I will be seen as. I'd much rather be concerned with what I feel about my films. I think my days of being seen as this hardcore maniac of violence are ending."

Craven is up to his jugular in work on two projects he believes will balance people's perceptions of him as a gut-wrencher. He took a breather from shooting an effects-jammed finale to his *DEADLY BLESSING*, while simultaneously juggling pre-production chores on start of *SWAMP THING*, to discuss his plans and his beginnings.

"I can't stand to look at *LAST HOUSE* now," the soft-spoken Craven admits. "I made it that way intentionally, because I wanted to say something about violence and American movies that told us how easy it is to kill someone. You shoot someone, stab them, and they roll over and die. Don't forget, I made that picture during the Vietnam era when people were watching villages being burned on TV while they ate their evening meals."

Craven insists that only his directorial restraint kept the film's producers from prevailing upon him to shoot little pleasantries for *LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT*, such as the heroine's feet being singed with cigar butts. "I'm not as angry at people as I was back then," explains the movie-



Wes Craven

maker, "but I never want to go that 'intense' again."

DEADLY BLESSING, a Polydor production for July release through United Artists, finds Craven working in a vein he likens to Hitchcock's approach for ferreting out horror in the commonplace and using striking visual correlatives to convey a sense of dread and malaise. The picture—featuring Ernest Borgnine, Maren Jensen, Susan Buckner, Sharon Stone and Lois Nettleton—is a murder thriller set in rural Pennsylvania, involving three women being terrorized by a fanatical group of black-garbed religious zealots called Hittites. Craven insists that this time out, he is assaulting the nerve-endings as opposed to the digestive system.

Written by Craven, Gary Benest and Matthew Barr, the director's first stab at "less intense" shocks admittedly had less than the loftiest of beginnings. Laughs Craven. "I think the picture was initially seen as almost a 'Charlie's Angels go to the Farm.' No one expected too much from it.

"It's turned out to be very unique—moody and suspenseful and loaded with disturbing visual images that I like—and there are no axe murders, knife wielders or lopped-off heads. I'm playing on ordinary things—the isolated rural setting, the clash of opposing lifestyles, religious ceremony, even farm animals—that are unsettling to people who aren't familiar with those experiences."

Craven speaks highly of his dealings with Polydor's executive producers Jon Peters and Peter Guber, who upped the production ante after viewing Craven's early rushes. "The result," says the director, "is a picture that people cannot believe we brought in on so low a budget. The cast and crew in Texas gave a great deal to *DEADLY BLESSING*, because I think they perceived we were attempting something different."

Although the extra funds partly were intended to pay for John Dykstra's participation in *DEADLY BLESSING*'s climax, the special effects ace was yanked off the picture because of his prior commitment to a Clint Eastwood film that was pushed forward three months. Craven states that the visual pyrotechnics in the final cut are solely the work of effects men Everett Alson and Ira Anderson, as well as costumer Tony Masters.

Craven's long delayed *SWAMP THING* for Avco-Embassy promises to be a unique version of the famous comic book hero, in that each of the film's major characters undergoes a physical transformation back to his (or her) essence in the course of the action. Already set to make the trek to the swamps of Carolina and Florida for filming are Louis Jourdan and Adrienne Barbeau, cinematographer Robbie Greenberg (*LATHE OF HEAVEN*) and art director David Nichols (*TAXI DRIVER*, *MEAN STREETS*).

"I know it may sound funny," says Craven, "but *SWAMP THING* has a tremendous degree of humor, character and personal feeling. I was careful in writing it to keep the whole thing in mind for human actors, not mechanical or animated effects. The audience spends the first act getting to know the hero as a funny, self-deprecating man; this makes his transformation into a half-human monstrosity more startling and affecting."

Initially, Craven's plans for visualizing the monster involved use of a complicated servomotor-driven head that would rest a full foot above the head and shoulders of a six-foot-six stuntman. Craven admits, "We just couldn't get enough range of expression in his facial features. The human face has over three hundred muscles; we only got twenty-six servomotors. We've sculpted masks and costumes, and I think they're far more effective." The swamp creature will



The somewhat more restrained horrors of Craven's *DEADLY BLESSING*. Top: Sharon Stone is victimized by a bizarre religious cult. Bottom: Ernest Borgnine as the Hittite cult leader.

In *LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT*, Jeramie Rain disembowels still-conscious Lucy Grantham. The organ was made by sewing together six sheep gut condoms.



be shown as having tremendous affinity for the sun, great camouflaging capabilities and the ability to take root into the ground to elude its pursuers.

Craven envisions himself toiling in the horror field for quite some time. On completion of *SWAMP THING*, he will direct his original script for *NIGHTMARE ON ELMA STREET* in Australia. Explains Craven of his predilections, "Horror movies take people where their minds only go during sleep states or altered states. They deal with images and situations that are like scenarios for the apocalypse, or, at least, the anxieties that shoot through us all or all of our culture. In that sense, they're very important movies." □

CORMAN'S CUT-RATE FX

New World Pictures' special effects studio is the unlikely source of some top craftsmanship.

By Bob Villard

There could be few less likely names in Hollywood to be linked with multi-million dollar budgets—and elaborate, expensive special effects—than genre veteran Roger Corman, who achieved his fame by directing and producing an almost-endless stream of successful low-budget quickies.

But two years ago, Corman's New World Pictures jumped into the realm of big-budget films (well, it was a lot of money for *them*) with the \$5 million *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*. To make the film possible, Corman established his own special effects studio in Venice, California. The effects footage was certainly competent, if not innovative, and achieved for a fraction of the cost to comparable space operas. The studio—built on the site of an old lumber yard—has since prospered, most recently providing convincing miniature and matte work for John Carpenter's *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, and New World's own August release, the *ALIEN*-esque *MINDWARP*.

Carpenter became interested in the New World crew after initial overtures with other effects experts left him a bit depressed: on his \$7 million budget, he simply couldn't afford all the effects in the script. But at New

World, the price was right.

New World's contributions include Kurt Russell's glider flight to, and crash landing on, the roof of the World Trade Center; several scenes involving miniature helicopters; and mattes combining various live-action locations with a near-future, burnt-out New York. Many of the effects could have been shot on location, if not for considerations of time, expense, safety and bureaucratic red tape. "They won't let you land gliders on the World Trade Center, or let you fly helicopters over Central Park," said Tom Campbell, an expert trouble-shooter—and former motorcycle mechanic—who served as miniature engineer for both *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS* and *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*. In addition, it would have been impossible to ask Manhattan's residents to turn off their lights so a crew could film the darkened skyline.

Instead, the New World crew built a miniature Manhattan on the floor of their main stage. "It was mostly cardboard boxes, or whatever else we could find that was about the right size," said Campbell. "We took photographs of buildings and pasted them on the boxes, then we put in buses, docks, and tried to make it as much to scale as we could. There were drawings on some of the boxes, too. We had to make everything look like real life. In *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*, we just had to make it look neat."

The miniature is used for Russell's point-of-view shot as his glider approaches the tip of the island, with water effects achieved with back-lit glossy black paint. The miniature was also photographed and used as the basis for several matte paintings. In addition, for some shots a photograph of the miniature was pasted

Below: Filming the ascent into the alien pyramid (inset) for *MINDWARP*, New World's August release with striking visual and script parallels to *ALIEN*, like (top) a derelict alien ship and pilot.



New York City rises up on the New World stage for *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*. Photos of the actual buildings were pasted onto cardboard boxes in the mockup.

onto a piece of glass and hung between the camera and the live-action set, like an old-fashioned glass painting. With this process, the Sepulveda Dam in the San Fernando Valley (which doubled as the headquarters of the United States Police Force) was made to appear situated just outside Manhattan.

Miniature effects were also required to film helicopters flying toward the city. "The blades had to turn 24 times slower than real life," Campbell explained, "because we shot it at a one-second exposure." Only two miniature copters were actually built; a combination of matting and double exposures expanded the fleet.

Realism was far from Campbell's goal while serving as effects supervisor for *MINDWARP* (a.k.a. *PLANET OF HORRORS*; a.k.a. *QUEST*), a \$1.8 million New World project directed and co-written by Bruce Clark. The film concerns a group of astronauts (Edward Albert, Erin Moran, Ray Walston, Zalman King) who explore an enormous, mysterious pyramid-like structure on an alien world. Once inside the pyramid, they're each confronted by a horrifying materialization of their innermost fear which, more often than not, proves fatal.

The production was designed by Jim Cameron and Bob Skotak, who created a Giger-like bio-mechanical landscape and architecture to suit Corman. Among the major effects are about 15 sequences compositing actors into and around the mammoth alien structure (perhaps not coincidentally, a pyramid figured heavily in early script versions of *ALIEN*). Since building such immense sets was not feasible, miniatures were built, photographed and transformed into stunning matte paintings. Large format black & white negatives were blown up to mural size and heavily retouched with minute details and muted colors.

"For some reason, Roger doesn't like the term 'matte painting,'" Campbell laughed, "so we affection-

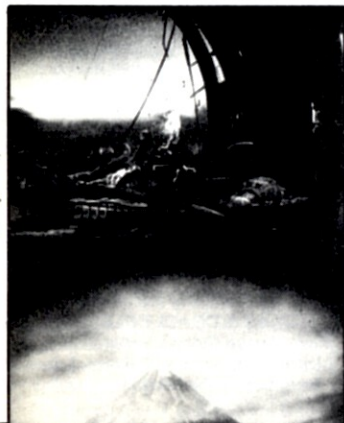
ately refer to them as 'Photo Mattes,' as in the little place with the yellow roof where you get your shapshots developed."

To avoid costly, and time-consuming optical work, actors were inserted into the paintings *live*, through the use of a "beam-splitter" (a half-silvered mirror used in front-projection systems). By placing the mirror at a 45° angle to the camera, both the "photo matte" and actors on a full-size set could be photographed at the same time. With careful lighting, and by photographing the actors with a reverse-focus lens—similar to looking through the wrong end of a pair of binoculars—the tiny actors were instantly composited into dark areas of the painting.

Other contributions of the New World staff to *MINDWARP* include a giant, raping maggot, huge spiders, a shadow demon creature and a death-by-tentacles sequence—effects requiring the use of full-size mechanical mock-ups, hand puppets, men in suits, stop-motion animation, beam-splitters, motion control, blue screen work—or as Tom Campbell said, "Anything that works!"

Even as the New World staff labored to meet *MINDWARP*'s summer deadline, they were simultaneously providing effects for *SATURDAY THE 14TH*, a New World spoof, and using their Elicon motion control system to produce a foreign television commercial.

The studio will be busy well into the future. Upcoming projects include *MUTANT*, a New World space saga written by advertising director Jim Wynorski and effects technician R. J. Robertson; *BATTLE TANK 2000*, which will be shot on foreign locations with effects work handled back in the Venice studio; *BARBARIAN*, an original story by Wynorski described as Frazetta meets Peckinpah meets Russ Meyer meets Sergio Leone; and a planned sequel to *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*, the film which has helped make all the rest possible. □



GHOST STORY

Peter Straub's best-seller gets the big-budget, star name treatment.

By Paul R. Gagne

What with the plethora of low-class, low-budget horror films glutting the market, major studios have gone to great measures to distinguish their genre products from the unruly rabble of independent productions. But few films could hope to match the type of distinguished cast Universal Pictures has assembled for its \$14 million adaptation of Peter Straub's GHOST STORY, set for release this Christmas.

Fred Astaire, Melvyn Douglas, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and John Houseman star as the members of the "Chowder Society," four prominent, elderly residents of a small upstate New York community who have been meeting for the past 50 years to tell each other ghost stories.

The cast also features Oscar-winner Patricia Neal, Jacqueline Brookes and newcomer Craig Wesson. The film is being produced by Burt Weissbourd, whose only other producing credit is the upcoming RAGGEDY MAN, starring Sissy

On location: newcomer Craig Wesson, director John Irvin, Astaire & Houseman.

Spacek.

For 41-year-old director John Irvin (who won acclaim for his television adaptation of John LeCarre's TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SPY and whose most recent credit was THE DOGS OF WAR), the first night the actors were assembled for rehearsal was "truly memorable." For the duration of the three-month shooting schedule, Irvin said, "They were like a good string quartet; harmonious, really."

Irvin hadn't read Straub's best-selling novel when first approached to do the film, and he didn't do so until after he'd worked out a satisfactory script with Laurence D. Cohen (who also adapted Stephen King's CARRIE for Brian DePalma). "I felt that my ignorance would be beneficial, because the book is so complex," explained the British director.

In Cohen's script—which differs quite a bit from the book [see 10:2:8]—the ghost stories are the only release Chowder Society members have from some terrible guilt that haunts them from the past. They are all plagued with recurring nightmares. Now, as they approach death, their anxieties are physically manifested in the person, or ghost, of Alma Mobley (played by South African beauty queen Alice Krige). The novel presented Alma Mobley as an undying, evil entity who consciously set out to corrupt and destroy the Chowder Society, but that tack was abandoned by Cohen for a more traditional ghost.

"I wanted to make a ghost story that was secular," Irvin explained. "I didn't want to make a film that relied for its atmosphere on some kind of cosmic evil. I felt that the evil people do to each other was quite frightening enough."

Though trying to give a horror story a form of "psychological logic" often burdens it to the point of boredom, Irvin insists that's not the case

here. "My first duty is to frighten people," he said. "It certainly frightened me when I looked at a rough assemblage the other day. But I do hope that the movie will also be something more than a ride at a fair, and that there are levels within the story that are emotionally and psychologically satisfying. What Cohen did was to create a 'cat's cradle,' a narrative style that I'm partial to: clues presented way ahead of time, echoes, reprises, motifs, and so on. It's lucid and intelligent. It's also very frightening."

A good deal of the film's fright will come from the nightmares each member of the Chowder Society suffers and from several grisly deaths. In addition to his more conventional duties (including a look-alike dummy for Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.'s leap from a high bridge), makeup artist Dick Smith has developed a series of four ghostly apparitions, which are being kept under tight wraps until the film's release.

Several of the film's frights will also be enhanced by the work of Albert Whitlock, Universal's in-house matte expert. Whitlock, whose expertise extends beyond simple matte paintings to create unusual visual effects, has combined forces with Smith on several of the film's powerful nightmare sequences, including a scene where John Houseman drives a car straight through an apparition of Alma Mobley.

Another of Whitlock's responsibilities was to maintain the film's bleak, dark, winter mood. The script calls for the fictional town of Milburn to be slowly covered in mountains of snow as the haunting takes its full effect. Nature usually provides Saratoga Springs, New York (where much of the film was shot) with ample snow, but the winter of 1981 was unexpectedly glorious, much to the chagrin of the GHOST STORY crew.



Alice Krige, who plays ghost Alma Mobley, with producer Burt Weissbourd.

"The weather was *perverse*," Irvin sighed. "It didn't snow when we wanted it to, and the snow we did have thawed. But thanks to Albert Whitlock, the audience will never know how large a problem it was."

Irvin declined to talk much about his directorial style in GHOST STORY, other than to admit that different camera and lighting techniques were used to stylize and separate the sequences in terms of past vs. present and illusion vs. reality. "I think that when directors talk about their approach, their method and their vision, it tends to look very pretentious on the printed page," Irvin explained. "Generally, I prefer for people to make their own observations. I hope GHOST STORY is rich enough to provide quite a few observations. Certainly, I've attempted something very ambitious, stylistically. It's complex, but very solid." □



BOXOFFICE SURVEY: SUPERMAN II SOARING, DRAGONSLAYER FALTERS

SUMMER GENRE FILMS

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (3)	\$12,158,310
• SUPERMAN II (2)	\$11,962,617
CLASH OF THE TITANS (3)	\$5,866,094
OUTLAND (6)	\$5,281,271
FRIDAY THE 13TH—II (9)	\$4,925,145
• HISTORY OF THE WORLD—PART I (3)	\$4,079,582
• FOR YOUR EYES ONLY (1)	\$3,033,500
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME (7)	\$2,507,398
TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE (re-rel, 8)	\$1,666,910
THE FAN (7)	\$1,161,943
• THE GREAT MUPPET CAPER (1)	\$1,158,753
THE HAND (10)	\$1,033,286
• DRAGONSLAYER (1)	\$948,600

Regional or Local Release

POLYESTER (5)	\$906,344
FINAL EXAM (5)	\$393,298

According to boxoffice figures reported weekly by *Variety*, SUPERMAN II and RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK have emerged as the runaway hits of the summer season. Top-grossing films in the *Variety* totals (in release since May) are listed at left. They are ranked with earlier releases this year at right. The dollar figures listed represent only a small, scientific sample of film earnings since January 1 (approximately 25%). The number in parentheses indicates the number of weeks in release, through July 1. Titles preceded by a bullet (•) have upward momentum and will rise in the listings as summer playoff continues.

Ray Harryhausen's CLASH OF THE TITANS is a solid hit, spurring MGM to back Harryhausen with another big-budget on SINBAD GOES TO MARS.

Slash-and-stalk horror continues to make a strong showing as evidenced by the figures for FRIDAY THE 13TH—PART II and a reissue of Tobe Hooper's THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE.

DRAGONSLAYER, however, appears to have gotten off to a very poor start. Exhibitors began double-billing it in its opening week, and many dumped it after only two weeks. With a production cost of \$16 million, the film looks to be a sure money-loser. □

TOP GENRE FILMS OF '81

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (3)	\$12,158,310
• SUPERMAN II (2)	\$11,962,617
EXCALIBUR (12)	\$8,957,781
ALTERED STATES (26)	\$7,176,428
• CLASH OF THE TITANS (3)	\$5,866,094
THE HOWLING (16)	\$5,501,531
POPEYE (26)	\$5,381,750
SCANNERS (24)	\$5,372,858
• OUTLAND (6)	\$5,281,271
FRIDAY THE 13TH—II (9)	\$4,925,145
THE FINAL CONFLICT (15)	\$4,663,455
THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING WOMAN (22)	\$4,298,427
• HISTORY OF THE WORLD—PART I (3)	\$4,079,582
• FOR YOUR EYES ONLY (1)	\$3,033,500
STAR WARS (re-rel, 3)	\$2,996,080
MANIAC (22)	\$2,691,175
CAVEMAN (11)	\$2,606,583
THE DEVIL AND MAX DEVLIN (21)	\$2,549,518

VIRUS

A big-budget, post-holocaust tale from the land of the rising sun seeks U. S. distribution.

By David Lewis

VIRUS is a multi-million dollar spectacle based on *Fukkatso no Hi* (literally "Resurrection Day"), one of the early novels of Japanese science fiction giant Sakyo Komatsu. The author is perhaps best known in the West for *Nippon Chimbotsu*, an epic disaster novel about the submergence of Japan during violent tectonic plate movements. (Known as *Japan Sinks to the West*, the 1973 novel sold nearly four million copies in Japan, a first for a science fiction novel. The Toho Film version raked in about four billion yen, but garnered considerably less during a brief overseas release as *THE SUBMERSION OF JAPAN*. It's special effects were reincarnated in Roger Corman's *TIDAL WAVE*.)

Fukkatso no Hi is another near-future disaster tale, but this 1964 novel is more like a mix of *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN*, *ON THE BEACH* and *DR. STRANGELOVE*. A deadly virus concocted at a bacteriological warfare lab is accidentally released into the atmosphere by the spy who steals it. The new disease, dormant only in freezing temperatures, quickly decimates the human race. A handful of survivors in Antarctica learns that an impending earthquake threatens to trigger an American doomsday device. Two volunteers, armed only with a test tube of experimental vaccine, board a submarine on a desperate mission to a ruined Washington, D.C. to disarm the weapon.

Filming Komatsu's novel was the brainchild of Haruki Kadokawa, the 39-year-old president of the Kadokawa publishing empire who has been turning out a string of box office hits since establishing Haruki Kado-

kawa Films, Inc. in 1976. Kadokawa's first production, *THE INUGAMIS*, broke single-day attendance records across Japan. Kadokawa, who has a strong personal interest in science fiction, aims for a flashy kind of cosmopolitanism, big budgets and unprecedented media blitzes.

Kadokawa has claimed *VIRUS* is the movie he got into the movie business to make, and that all his other films to date were simply practice runs. Whether or not this is mere publicity hype remains to be seen, yet it is undeniable that Kadokawa Films pulled out all the stops for this production, shooting on location in Europe, Alaska, Washington, South America and the Antarctic for 18 months to the tune of 3 billion yen (about \$13 million). The production company borrowed submarines from the navies of Canada and Chile, and even made world headlines when its chartered cruise ship *Linbald Explorer* went aground off Antarctica on Christmas Eve, 1979 (the ship was rescued by a Russian research vessel).

To guarantee that he got something for his efforts, Kadokawa named Kinji Fukasaku, Japan's most successful, if not the most artistic, director to helm the project. Fukasaku has had exposure in the West as director of the Japanese segments for *TORA, TORA, TORA* and more recently with his Toei Film Co. science fantasy *UCHU KARA NO MESSEJI*, seen fleetingly in the States as *MESSAGE FROM SPACE*.

The *VIRUS* cast includes George Kennedy, Robert Vaughn, Bo Svenson and Olivia Hussey, with Japanese film idol Masao Kusakiri playing the hero who staggers through a panorama of rusting cars and dehydrated



Yoshizumi (Maseo Kusakiri) sarcastically checks with the plague-riddled corpse of Gen. Garland (formerly Henry Silva) before disarming America's doomsday device.

corpses. Phil Kellison and his Coast Special Effects handled the bulk of the film's effects work (much of which, inexplicably, was edited out of the final release print). Gregory Jein was brought in for consultation on the submarine miniatures, Mike Minor provided the matte paintings and Teo Macero was borrowed from CBS for musical direction.

All told, *VIRUS* is a production worthy of the Kadokawa trademark, and in places it does shine with the tremendous effort put into it. The grandeur of the Antarctic locations commands respect, and there are many satisfyingly grotesque glimpses of a plague-wasted world.

The film suffers most from slow pacing, some unconvincing acting (Kusakiri had to learn his English lines phonetically) and occasionally Byzantine plotting. Also uncomfortable are the too-handy stereotypes of crazed generals, conniving politicians and grimacing spies who, being Japanese stereotypes rather than

Western ones, are not always easy for foreigners to swallow. How many of these defects have been remedied in the revised and abbreviated English-language version should decide *VIRUS*' success in getting a U.S. distributor.

In any case, the film can certainly claim credit as one of the boldest attempts yet by a Japanese film company to grab a slice of the international movie market. What's more, as an attempt to handle serious science fiction themes on a grand cinematic scale, it is unprecedented in Japan.

In its native release last year the film did very well, but not as well as expected in light of production costs. Undoubtedly, the ultimate financial performance of *VIRUS* and Kadokawa's second major science fiction film, *TIME SLIP* (filmed as *SENGOKU JIETTAI*, it's the story of an armored platoon transplanted into 17th Century Japan), will have a major impact on the future of serious genre films in Japan. □

Caroline Munro



THE LAST HORROR FILM

*Caroline Munro Best Actress at Cannes? *Sigh* Only in the movies.*

By Frederic Albert Levy

Would you believe Caroline Munro received the Best Actress Award at this year's Cannes Film Festival—the first horror star to win such a distinction?

Well, would you believe that's what happens in *THE LAST HORROR FILM*, which David Winters directed in Cannes during the Festival this year? The script may represent Caroline's wish fulfillment; it's certainly the closest she'll ever get to such a prestigious acting prize.

"I hate horror films and I never see any," said Winters, the director and co-producer. "My original idea was to use the glamour of Cannes for a romantic film." But Winters' co-producer, Judd Hamilton (Munro's friend and manager) had in mind the success of *MANIAC*, and insisted they do a horror film. "We imme-

diately realized this was a wonderful idea," Winters is quick to add. "We'd have horror and the glamour of Cannes going against each other, and that would be a very original conflict. In fact, the film is a violent non-violent film." Winters talks like that.

The script is about Jana Bates (Munro), a horror queen who comes to Cannes to receive her prize. The fest soon becomes a bloody one, as she finds herself chased and kidnapped by an overenthusiastic fan (*MANIAC*'s Joe Spinell) who kills about a dozen people to reach her. He takes her to his castle, where he has her play in his horror film, *LOVES OF DRACULA*, in which they both die.

The notion of doing the film came up only five weeks before the festival was to open. Winters and Hamilton wrote the script in two weeks and had to make all the necessary arrange-

ments for shooting—including a detour via London for some additional casting—in the final three weeks. Winters spent only four days scouting for locations, and started filming with a number of script questions still pending, particularly regarding the ending; he didn't know whether Munro would die in the final scene. He is confident that, despite all the inevitable unknowns in such a hurried enterprise, he won't go over his \$2 million budget.

Winters, Hamilton and Munro plan to continue as a production unit and have already begun preproduction on *STELLA STARR VS. THE SPACE PIRATES*, derived from a Luigi Cozzi script called *STAR PATROL*. Cozzi directed Munro as Stella Starr in *STARCRASH*, but now that Winters is in as director, it appears that Cozzi is out. □

**They can hear a cloud pass overhead,
the rhythm of your blood.
They can track you by yesterday's shadow.
They can tear the scream from your throat.**



WOLFEN

There is no defense.

A KING-HITZIG PRODUCTION OF A MICHAEL WADLEIGH FILM ALBERT FINNEY IN "WOLFEN" GERRY FISHER, B.S.C. MUSIC BY JAMES HORNER EXECUTIVE PRODUCER ALAN KING
PRODUCED BY ROBERT HITZIG SCREEN STORY AND SCREENPLAY BY DAVID EYRE AND MICHAEL WADLEIGH BASED ON THE BOOK BY WHITLEY STRIEBER DIRECTED BY MICHAEL WADLEIGH



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OPENS JULY 24

HEARTBEEPS

Love means never having to say you're soldered.

By Kyle Counts

Universal has high hopes for HEARTBEEPS, a \$9 million robotic love story set in 1995. Directed by Alan Arkush and produced by Michael Phillips (THE STING, TAXI DRIVER and CE3K), the futuristic fable has already been completely shot and edited, but is not scheduled for release until Christmas because of postproduction requirements.

Screenwriter John Hill, who is also the film's associate producer, originally conceived HEARTBEEPS as

an offbeat novel some years ago but abandoned it because he felt it wasn't sufficiently commercial. Over lunch one day with friend and producer Michael Phillips he casually mentioned the idea, which Phillips immediately warmed to. Hill wrote the script—his first feature effort—and Phillips set a deal with Universal. "Now Michael says he only wants to hear ideas that I don't think are very commercial," said Hill.

Starring television comic Andy Kaufman (known for TAXI and his SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE appearances) and Bernadette Peters (SILENT MOVIE, THE JERK) as two companion-series robots, ValCom-17485 and AquaCom-89045, the movie tells of a makeshift family of automatons that wanders away from a robot repair facility to explore the unknown world outside.

Joining Val and Aqua are Catskill, the "crazy uncle," a Borscht-belt comedian robot with a voice supplied by comic Jack Carter; Crimebuster, a futuristic version of law enforcement on wheels; and Phil, the "baby" of the family, constructed by Val and Aqua from spare parts. Phil's innards include pieces of a Fender guitar, and his musical voice will be strummed by The Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia.

Randy Quaid and Kenneth McMillan play the human factory workers who must set out to look for the four missing robots. Melanie Mayron and Christopher Guest are featured as Calvin and Susan Gort, the eccentric junkyard owners who be-

friend the roving family of tomorrow.

After searching for months for the right director to realize Hill's whimsical script, producer Phillips sought out Alan Arkush on the strength of the director's New World cult-smash ROCK & ROLL HIGH SCHOOL. Two days after their initial meeting, the deal was set. Arkush, who'd begun his film career cutting New World trailers with Joe Dante (they also co-directed New World's HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD), was awed to be handed the multi-million dollar film. After all, Phillips had produced TAXI DRIVER, which was directed by Arkush's teacher and faculty advisor at the NYU Film School, Martin Scorsese. He was also a little unsure that a robot story was his kind of material. But after reading the script, Arkush realized these robots were being presented in a way never before seen in films, in a style he felt was reminiscent of the romantic silent films of Frank Borzage. "I was hooked," Arkush said. "I kept stressing to Michael how I thought it should be played as a love story."

Arkush prepped for the film by looking at as many "robot movies" as possible, everything from TOBOR THE GREAT to THE INVISIBLE BOY to STAR WARS. "They all helped me in different ways," said Arkush, "but what really convinced me that this picture could work was the card-playing scene in SILENT RUNNING. I realized that the robots would be tremendously effective if they were reacting to situations, the way Huey, Dewey and Louie did."

Even before signing Arkush, Phillips had begun searching for able Hollywood craftsmen to create the film's unusual robotic cast. Originally, actual mechanicals were to be used, but after getting bids from builders of \$1 million per robot and at least a year's construction time—with no guarantee that the mechanicals ultimately would work—Phillips was forced to re-evaluate Hill's concept. Eventually, the decision was made to put actors in makeup for Val and Aqua, assemble Catskill and Crimebuster as partial mechanicals and make Phil the sole complete automaton.

Arkush had initial doubts about having actors portray the robot leads, but he changed his mind after screening Andy Kaufman's recent TV special featuring the comedian talking at length with Howdy Doody. "That said to me that if this man could talk to a puppet with such believability and emotion, he could talk to Phil and pull it off."

Mechanical-effects designer Jamie Shourt—who had also worked on the robots for SILENT RUNNING—

brainstormed with Phillips to create a cardboard prototype for the "all-terrain" robot, Phil. "Nothing like Phil presently exists, even in the nuclear industry, where they use robots for bomb disposal," said Shourt. Phil had to move from a finely-carpeted living room to 15-degree exterior slopes covered with pine needles, as well as cross a flowing stream and pick up a live rabbit, and Shourt managed to devise a unique drive-train system for Phil's main locomotive device.

"Michael Phillips and I worked very closely on getting the visual quality of the character without compromising any of my specs," said Shourt. "Phil is a kinetic piece of art, and Michael and I were equally the sculptors of it." Three months transpired from conception to fabrication of the two Phil units (a back-up was used for simultaneous filming and as insurance against the main unit breaking down).

Makeup artist Stan Winston (DEAD AND BURIED, THE WIZ) designed and applied the prosthetic appliances that turned Kaufman and Peters into Val and Aqua, as well as modifying Catskill's design to give the robot more personality. Winston and assistants Mike McCracken and Jim Kagle fashioned several different character sculptures on the basis of early conceptual discussions with Arkush and Phillips. Each design was unique, yet coordinated with the others so that there would be a balance to the overall look.

Peters was given a soft, golden cast, complete with a fashionable head of plastic hair, the contribution of Ziggy Geike. Kaufman has a more masculine bronze tone, as well as a modified Howdy Doody hairstyle, which Arkush suggested as a "treat" to Kaufman, a fan of the show.

"It's one of the most extensive makeup jobs to date," recounted Winston, who said it took three hours each morning to apply and over a half-hour to remove. "Bernadette and Andy are in full prosthetic makeup in every scene. Every inch of bare skin was covered with gelatin appliances, which gives you a translucent quality you can't get from foam rubber."

While the gelatin base helped rid the actors of their normal skin tones, it also had a tendency to retain body sweat and melt. It became necessary to shoot as many close-ups as possible when the makeup was still fresh, and to have makeup men standing by for constant touch-ups. Additionally, the dentures Peters wore to add an extra artificial touch gave her a slight speech impediment. Extensive looping is being done in postproduction to improve her diction, and to add a



Bernadette Peters, a runaway robot, builds her own "child" from spare parts.



Above (left to right): Kenneth McMillan, Randy Quaid and director Alan Arkush on the set of HEARTBEEPS' robot factory. The odd-looking guy in the middle, called "Catskills," is a joke-telling robot with a voice by Jack Carter. Right: Andy Kaufman uses spare parts to build "Phil," an all-terrain robot designed by Jamie Shourt and producer Michael Phillips.

synthesized quality to both characters' voices.

Catskill, who was given an aged silver quality to complement his caricatured look, is really two robots: one with an actor inside, who "tells" jokes by waving his arms about while an effects crew controls his eyebrow and facial movements; the other a unit that moves around on a motorized, remote-control base provided by Jamie Shourt.

Both Catskill and Crimebuster were built by a Universal crew headed by veteran Mel Arnold, who also constructed TOBOR THE GREAT and Gort for THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. Crimebuster, an off-road vehicle over which a body was erected, had to be operated by two people hidden inside, with another operator outside to control its various lethal accessories, such as machine guns and flame-throwers. Such hardware made Crimebuster the heaviest and most troublesome of all the robots.

"There's only so much you can ask mechanical things to do," sighed Arkush. "It was especially difficult to get their motors to stop at exact points so that the robots could hit their marks. We were using so many radio frequencies to operate them that sometimes they would jam each other and start freaking out." During the shooting of a scene in which a racoon climbs atop Phil, an airplane suddenly flew overhead, jamming Phil's control signals and giving him a severe case of shakes. The racoon, holding on for dear life, pulled Phil's head completely off. "It's a great outtake," said Arkush. "You can hear the

whole crew groan."

The primary reason for HEARTBEEPS' long postproduction period is the complex dubbing required for the film's extensive sound effects. "Whenever the robots move," explained Arkush, "they make sounds, so obviously there's a ton of sound effects in the picture." Colin Moate, who generated the soundtrack for JAWS, is handling the sound work here.

Another reason for delay involves the score; prior commitments do not allow composer John Williams to begin work until September. Resultingly, sales prints of the picture will be sent out with a New Wave-style temporary score that was recorded for the work print. Williams, who is said to have liked the temporary soundtrack, has plans to compose a score that is more modern and less orchestral than his usual efforts.

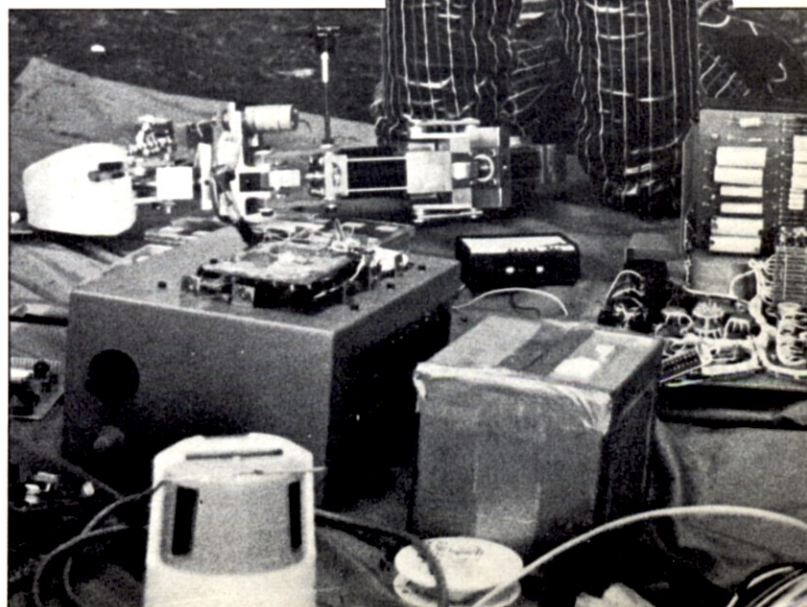
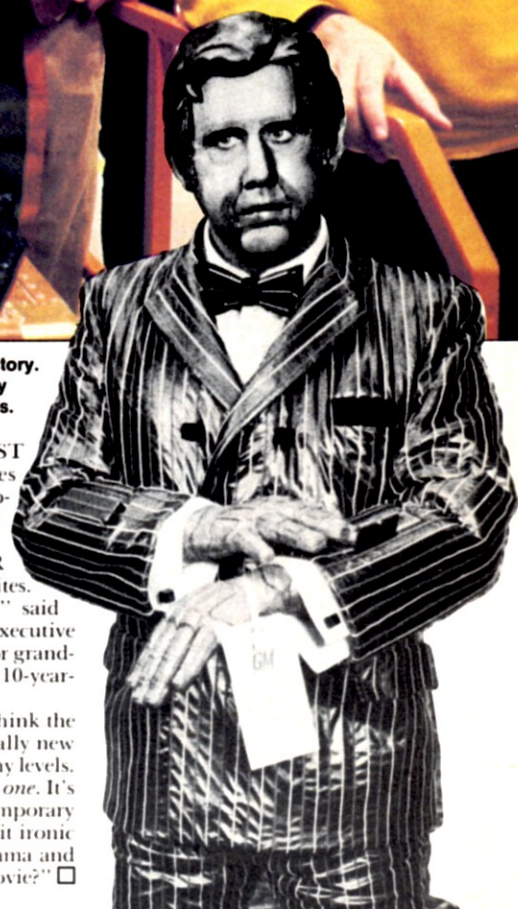
The photography, under the supervision of Charles Rosher (NIGHTWING), will attempt to capture the lush, romantic feel of 19th Century landscape paintings, which is why much of the film was shot in sylvan Santa Cruz, California, locations. Outdoor shots will be expanded through the use of extensive mattes rendered by Albert Whitlock, whose masterful illusions can currently be seen in Mel Brook's HISTORY OF THE WORLD—PART I. According to Arkush, Whitlock is "having a ball," because he loves landscape painting and rarely gets an opportunity to create naturalistic mattes.

HEARTBEEPS is one of three genre films currently slated by Universal for Christmas release (along

with CONAN and GHOST STORY). Studio executives are hoping the film will capture the same type of broad audience that has made THE WIZARD OF OZ and STAR WARS such perennial favorites.

"Our audience is any age," said Bruce Berman, supervising executive on the film. "It's as much for grandparents as it is for someone's 10-year-old daughter."

Added Jamie Shourt, "I think the film is going to create a totally new audience. It works on so many levels. Most movies barely work on one. It's more human than any contemporary drama I've seen lately. Isn't it ironic that we have to look for drama and human emotion in a robot movie?" □





Nine Days In Cimmeria:

On location with CONAN
A journal by Paul M. Sammon

**Thursday,
Jan. 22**

The *Puerta del Sol* is a non-stop express train which makes the Paris-to-Madrid run in 15 hours. After breakfasting on this quintessentially European transport at 7 a.m. (in a dining car which looks like a relic of the days of the Tsars, all old woodwork and leaded glass), I suddenly realize I'm only a relatively short distance away from my final stop. It's been a long, colorful trip, from the beaches of San Diego through the sleet of London and Paris to the bitter cold of the French-Spanish border. It's hard to believe that I'm here on assignment, an assignment which means covering the location shooting of the upcoming CONAN THE BARBARIAN.

Outside, the rising sun reveals the stony, beautiful hills and mountains of Northern Spain. The

endless horizon, patches of snow and rolling meadows put me in mind of Cimmeria—the native land of Conan, Robert E. Howard's pulp hero. Old men, Basques, herd their cattle along innumerable dirt roads, plumes of blue cigarette smoke around their heads. As I watch the scenery roll by, I mentally rescreen the salient CONAN production facts in my mind.

CONAN THE BARBARIAN will be "a Dino De Laurentiis presentation of an Edward R. Pressman production of a John Milius film." Buzz Feitshans and Raffaella De Laurentiis are the film's line producers. John Milius (THE WIND AND THE LION, BIG WEDNESDAY) is directing. Although Milius has written four drafts of his own original script at this point, Oliver Stone (MIDNIGHT EXPRESS, THE HAND) will be given a co-screenwriting credit for his first version of the scenario, written before Milius and De Laurentiis entered the picture. Body

builder Arnold Schwarzenegger, of course, is the title character.

Others in the cast include Sandahl Bergman (the sizzling blonde on the scaffolding in ALL THAT JAZZ) as Conan's lover Valeria; Gerry Lopez (a world champion surfer who worked for Milius' on BIG WEDNESDAY) as Subotai, Conan's companion; James Earl Jones as Thulsa Doom, Conan's arch-enemy; Max Von Sydow as King Osric; Valerie Quennessen as his daughter, the princess of Shadizar; and Ben Davidson (a former Oakland Raider who turned to acting nearly ten years ago) as Rexor, Doom's right-hand man.

Nick Alder is handling the film's special effects. Ron Cobb, known for his old *L.A. Free Press* political cartoons and work on STAR WARS, ALIEN and CE3K—THE SPECIAL EDITION, is CONAN's production, costume and set designer. The film is budgeted approximately at \$17.5 million, and figures of \$10 to \$12 mil-

lion have been quoted for its advertising. CONAN is tentatively set for a Christmas '81 release; however, it might not be seen until early 1982. Universal will distribute the film domestically, with Fox handling overseas rentals.

Filming itself began January 7, 1981 (some shots of Schwarzenegger as an aged king were lensed in England in late 1980 for a never-realized Christmas trailer—the footage will probably find its way into the release print), with a scene of Conan fighting off a pack of wolves. This was also the day of the film's first accident. One of the dogs, trained to attack an animal skin Schwarzenegger was wearing, became over-eager and knocked the actor off a ten-foot cliff into a briar patch. But like Conan, Schwarzenegger is tough; his physical conditioning saved him from nothing more serious than a bruised and scratched back. Robert E. Howard, who created Conan for the 1932 WEIRD TALES story *The Phoe-*

At lunch Arnold Schwarzenegger still has on his pit fighter camouflage makeup. I tell him that he looks like a demented racoon. He laughs. I'm glad that Arnold has a sense of humor.

Left: Conan (Arnold Schwarzenegger) as a champion slave and pit fighter. A pit-fighter defends himself gladiator-style while standing in an open grave, his only reward to crawl out alive. Right: James Earl Jones as Conan's nemesis Thulsa Doom, transplanted from Howard's "King Kull" series.





Left: Production designer Ron Cobb's sketch of a Pictish warrior, painted from head to toe. Right: Cobb's design was realized on ex-Mr. Universe Franco Columbu.

nix on the *Sword*, would have been proud.

The train pulls into Madrid's Charmartin station at 9:30 a.m. Dino De Laurentiis and Milius' own A-Team Productions are shooting in Madrid at the moment, using the city as a coordinating center and jumping-off point for the nearer location work. The remainder of CONAN, both interiors and exteriors, will be shot in locations all over Spain. These range from sets being built at Torrejon, the country's chief military airbase, to Almeria, at the extreme southern edge of Spain; other locations sport such exotic names as Cuenca and Avila.

Charmartin's platforms are crowded. I follow my fellow ex-passengers up a long, ancient, wooden escalator. At its top, a Spaniard stands with a piece of cardboard. My name is crudely printed on it. I walk towards him, smiling. The next moment my hand is being pumped by a young, blond American wearing glasses and expensively casual clothes. This is Terry Horsman, CONAN's project director, who's come to the station to meet me. After some quick pleasantries I'm hustled off to a waiting cab; the Spaniard, it turns out, is our driver. A few moments later we're swallowed up by the swarm

of Madrid's traffic and are on our way to the Apartamentos Villa Magna, temporary home for the majority of CONAN's cast and crew.

The cab which takes us to the hotel is highly personalized, decorated with pictures of the driver's family, crosses, holy medals and more. This individualized interior is practiced in virtually all the taxis of Madrid. After a few days I begin to think of them as charms against the cabbies' near-suicidal driving habits.

Madrid's streets are broad and clean, the architecture definitely vertical. Glancing out the window while Horsman talks, I see the crowds are formally, conservatively dressed. It's been a long time since I've seen so many three-piece suits. The sun is pouring down on the sidewalks out of a clear, blue sky. After the damp weather of London and Paris, the warmth filling up Madrid is a godsend—but not to the CONAN crew.

"You've just hit the driest winter in Spain in the last 20 years," Horsman tells me, "and it's hurting us. We were shooting exteriors of the Cimmerian village outside Segovia about a week ago (said village being Conan's boyhood home and setting for the opening scene in the film), and what little snow we had

then is gone now. We needed that snow, too, because Cimmeria's supposed to be a cold, rough place. I don't know how they're going to match up their shots, especially since we have to go back up there again in about a week."

When I ask if some alternate plan hasn't been considered, Horsman smiles wryly. "We were going to shoot that material up in the Pyrenees. But everybody told us no, there's going to be plenty of snow outside Madrid..."

A few minutes later we pull up in front of the broad, sunken concrete square which surrounds the Apartamentos Villa Magna. It's a bizarre structure, roughly 25 stories high, bristling with stone balconies which make it look like some modernized Mayan temple. The fact that it's not the only building of this type in this square—it is surrounded by a half-dozen identical twins—increases the strangeness; the overall effect is like walking into a plaza of ancient gantry towers.

Once inside, however, it's like any other well-heeled European hostelry: glass, carpets, polished wood. As I've only two pieces of luggage, Horsman suggests immediately going up to the third floor where the CONAN production team has its offices.

Upstairs, at one end of the long corridor running down the length of floor three is a suite belonging to the De Laurentiis group. A life-size reproduction of the first Conan paperback cover painted by Frank Frazetta (which, with modifications, is the cover of this issue) hangs on a far wall. On a door leading into the De Laurentiis offices an original piece of William Stout artwork—a colored drawing festooned with horns, feathers and a sword—reads, simply, CONAN.

At the other end of the corridor are the A-Team offices. These are essentially a small anteroom, an accounting complex and Milius' own office, which in the 11 days of my visit I never see him use once. Flanking these two office complexes are elevators, restrooms and the editing facility.

I notice a projector in the editing room and ask Horsman the policy on dailies. "Tight," he says. Only a few personnel are allowed to view the rushes. These include Milius, Feitshans, Raffaella De Laurentiis (Dino's daughter) and Ron Cobb (a few days later, Robin Love, Cobb's engaging wife, tells me that, though people are killing to see the dailies, Cobb himself is fairly uninterested in them). I ask Horsman what my chances are of seeing the rushes myself. "Slight," he replies.

(I never do.)

On our way into Milius' office, where Horsman and I are to discuss my wants and needs for the coming week-and-a-half, we're stopped by a short, dark, powerfully-built man in a sports coat. This is Franco Columbu, an ex-Mr. Universe who briefly appears in CONAN as a Pictish warrior whose body has been painted from head to foot. He's stopped Horsman to say goodbye, as his time on the film is up, and to give Terry some farewell gifts, including a book on how to flatten your stomach.

Horsman is surprised—he had thought Columbu was going to be with the production for a longer period of time. A moment later I'm surprised; since Columbu is leaving, and rooms at the Apartamentos are scarce, Horsman instantly arranges for me to move into Columbu's vacant studio apartment. The move is a perfect opportunity. As nearly all the cast and crew not only live but socialize in this complex, quite a few artificial barriers will be struck down by my simple proximity (the fact that the otherwise well-equipped studio's bed is unbearably lumpy and that I'm forced to pull the mattress down to sleep on the floor is the only karmic trade-off for the convenience).

Milius' office is small and bare. Only a row of prop swords and bludgeons lining one wall and a litter of paperbacks on the wooden desk point to an inhabiting personality. Other than Horsman and myself, the production offices this morning are nearly deserted. Except for the necessary administrative personnel, everyone today is on-set at the Nave', (pronounced *nah-vay*), a production facility located approximately 25 miles south of Madrid where a number of sets have been built.

Horsman and I go over some of the questions I want to put to Milius. The director, it comes out,

hasn't been particularly happy with journalists in the past (most of whose articles have portrayed him as a bone-headed throwback). I assure Horsman I haven't any axes to grind; in fact, I point out that with his gifts as a writer and what I know of his intellect, if anything, I'm here to give Milius' image an overhaul. Horsman is polite, but skeptical. I'm still "the press" and to be basically mistrusted. But it's an easy misconception to break since I'm genuinely *not* headhunting, and within a few days I've been very nearly made to feel one of the family.

Horsman then tentatively sets up a dinner interview with Terry Leonard, CONAN's second-unit director and stunt coordinator, for later in the evening. I agree, find my room and unpack. Hours crawl by. A gorgeous, smoky sunset unfurls before my balcony (Madrid is afflicted with hideous smog problems, much worse than those back in L.A.) But the Leonard meeting doesn't happen. Horsman doesn't call my room to explain why, and I haven't been there long enough to know where to track him down.

It's a depressing experience. Not only am I now a prime example of the new kid on the block, but I feel as though I've gotten the requisite snub to prove it. A little yoga and a few glasses of a fine Spanish wine work wonders, however, and I'm soon in bed—on the floor. But I still go to sleep mulling over the fact that, on my first CONAN date, somebody stood me up.

Friday, Jan. 23

I'm up at sunrise, gathering together the necessary notes and questions for what I hope will be a productive day. Unlike the previous evening, it is.

After a good breakfast at a nearby cafe—in which I learn that not only do Spaniards prepare their food in liberal amounts of olive oil but that the words *preperado en matequilla*, or "cook it in butter," may be the most important bit of Spanish I'll know—I return to the Apartamentos and bump into Horsman. Terry immediately apologizes, saying that a combination of a sudden assignment on his part (to rework the CONAN production notes) and Leonard's begging off due to fatigue contributed to last night's foul-up.

Horsman says he's arranged for me to be at the Nave' all day long, where I'll have total access to the shooting going on at the Orgy Chamber set. Hearing this, I'm immediately interested—for a number of reasons. During this sequence, Conan, Subotai and Valeria raid Thulsa Doom's private pleasure chamber to kidnap and return the Princess to her father, King Osric, from whom Doom has taken her. This then will be my first opportunity to watch Milius and the rest of the crew at work and should be a good introduction to the film. Better still, it's certain to be violent, and I'm extremely curious as to how the filmmakers are going to handle the brutal physicality for which Howard was known.

I also find I'm to be taken to the Nave' in a cab with James Earl Jones, who currently is starring in *A LESSON TO ALOES* on Broadway. Jones, it seems, arrived in Spain for selective shooting yesterday. Horsman then tells me Jones must return to Broadway in two weeks time, and that much of the CONAN shoot at this point has been arranged around his schedule.

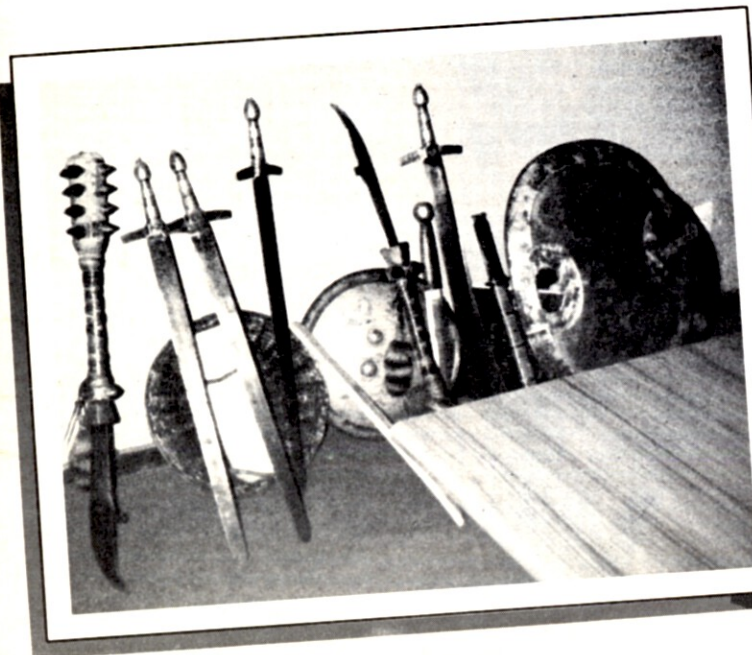
After introducing me to a new batch of people at the production office—including Tim O'Meara, CONAN's editor, who also assisted in the editing of *THE ROSE* and *ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN*

—Horsman leaves alone for the Nave'. Jones and I will follow in a later taxi. But I'm in good hands; while waiting for the car I chat with Beth Hickman, Feishan's secretary and another A-Team member. High-spirited and forthright, Hickman tells me that the Nave' houses six CONAN sets. She also tells me it's nothing more than a large, old factory building once used to paint tractors. It's now being leased by De Laurentiis, who, I'm beginning to sense, is a constant presence hovering over this project.

My driver arrives. Hickman says goodbye, and it's off for a short drive through a beautiful Madrid morning to the Euro Building, the hotel at which both Jones and William Smith (who plays the Master, CONAN's father) are staying. On the way, my driver and I manage to get a conversation going in broken Spanish. We talk about Spain's Basque terrorists, the fact that most everyone here would like to see Franco back and the cabbie's impression of the film company itself. He finds, he says, most of the crew "amusing."

Jones is waiting on the hotel steps. He climbs into the cab very causally dressed, wearing an "I LOVE NY" cap, a windbreaker, t-shirt and jeans. He's a well-mannered, almost courtly man, whose impeccable presence becomes a bit more relaxed when I assure him that I'm not going to be interview-

Shown around, I find Milius' office small and bare. Only a row of prop weapons lines one wall. I pick up a bludgeon and note that it is made for a Conan-size hand.



ing him for a few days yet. During the trip we chat about a number of things: his past roles, his relationship with the late Robert Shaw, his recent portrayal of Paul Robeson on PBS, and about how Stanley Kubrick actually built four sets of the interior of the B-52 Jones navigated in *DR. STRANGELOVE*, his first film.

Jones also lets slip, rather sheepishly, that even though the film's been out for over seven months, he still hasn't seen *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. Of *EMPIRE* director Irvin Kershner, however, he has nothing but praise. He tells me Kershner himself did his own dubbing of Vader's lines to give Jones an idea of what he wanted. "Kersh did a marvelous job," Jones tells me. "He has a marvellous voice. He could do Darth himself if he wanted to. In fact, he could be an excellent character actor in his own right."

We also speak of *CONAN*, of course, of Robert E. Howard's personal idiosyncrasies and of Jones' respect for Milius as a military historian. Jones tells me he sees some parallels in his role of Thulsa Doom, evil leader of the Cult of Set, with more contemporary figures such as Jim Jones and Charlie

Manson.

"Knowing John," Jones says, "I'm sure those parallels are intentional. But I jumped at the chance to play Doom because he's not a cartoon character. Let me explain that. You see, I always wanted to play John Gardner's *Grendel*, but then I heard they were going to do it as an animated feature. That was a great disappointment. So when I heard that *CONAN* was going to be a live-action feature and read the script, I gladly accepted the part of Doom. He's human and very complex. More importantly, I'm now given a chance to play a *real*, as opposed to animated, character."

After a 45-minute trip through the outskirts of Madrid—which are alternately as overcrowded as Brooklyn and as barren as the moon—we arrive at a dusty plot of land holding a large, two-story, wood and corrugated-iron structure. This is the Nave'. Outside, it's nothing more than a dirt parking lot and a row of large tents, under which the lunch tables for cast and crew wait in the shadows. A large, crude wooden sign by the side of the road reads *CONAN*, in bright red paint. Clusters of Spanish and Italian men wait in the lot, some of them seemingly obsessed with polishing and repolishing the company cars, which already gleam with a showroom finish.

Inside, however, it's another thing entirely, a combination of Oz, Sodom and Bedlam. Horsman meets me and asks if I'm ready to see the Orgy Chamber, where they're just setting up a shot. He then guides us through the various departments we must pass through before reaching the soundstage. First comes a ground-floor wardrobe room, where a half-dozen men and women are patiently working on the many silk and satin, leather

and fur costumes which will appear throughout the film. Then it's out into a large open area with a concrete floor, holding the many trailers for the stars and anyone above the line crew. A left turn past a table holding bottled water and urns of coffee, a push through some heavy black drapes which muffle extraneous sound from the set (topped by the ubiquitous red warning light), and we're suddenly into another era.

Gravel crunches beneath our feet. To the immediate left looms a pink, rocky wall, the base of the Orgy Chamber. Horsman leads the way down the narrow gravel path, which curves around and through bizarre three-foot phallic growths thrusting up from the crushed stone itself. "That's supposed to be fungus," Horsman says. "It's Ron's idea. See, the Orgy Chamber is supposed to be inside a mountain. And what's an Orgy Chamber without a formal fungus garden?" Once past the garden, a broad series of steps leads up to the set itself. And into total pandemonium.

Swarms of technicians—Spanish, French, English, American and Italian—are flying up and down the simulated marble risers. The Orgy Chamber itself, now that I have a full, unobstructed view of it, is stunning. It's three terraces high, with the main, middle level dominated by a shallow circular pit strewn with cushions, half-eaten food, silk curtains, flambeaus and a dozen naked men and women. This decadent tableau is dominated by a thick pink and grey marble pillar 12 feet high, which rears up from the center of the pit and is surmounted by four large serpent heads pointing in four different directions.

The pit surrounding this pillar is itself surrounded by a flat circu-

lar patio which runs outward to cave-pierced walls and yet another stairway. This staircase ends at the top level, where a small room hollowed out of the rock is the center of attention. This is the private chamber of Thulsa Doom, inlaid with scintillating green and gold tiles.

It's all really a marvelous construct, quite unlike most sets yet stylistically familiar as Cobb's work. Having followed Cobb's art since his old *FREEP* days, I can easily see that the overall design, with its fat ropy lashings and soft, rounded look, is unmistakably Cobbian. In fact, the final effect is like walking into one of his paintings.

Horsman takes me up the stairways to the top of the set to introduce me to Gil Taylor, the film's cinematographer. On our way past the pit I notice pools of blood splattered everywhere. There are also fat guards wearing lizard-like masks and lounging on thick pillows. These fellows play Neanderthals in the film. Horsman says that today Milius is getting takes of Conan and his companions cutting their way through a sex-and-drug-sotted crowd. That certainly explains the blood.

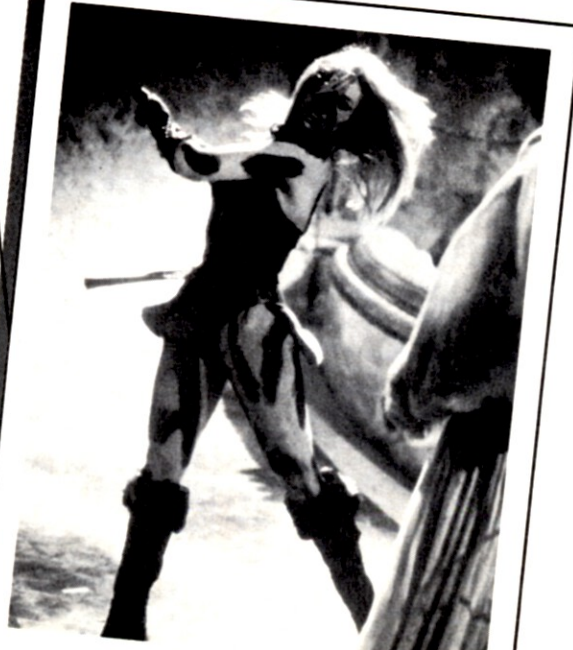
On our way up I notice other details. One is a huge cauldron filled with a thick green substance in which bob severed hands and feet. It seems the Neanderthals, part of Doom's elite guard, are having people soup for lunch when Conan interrupts them.

As I reach the top terrace I happen to glance back down and see a beautiful spotted leopard, anchored to the rock with a golden chain, lying in a small hole in the wall off to the side of the pit. "One of Thulsa's pets," Horsman explains. The animal looks drugged. "It is," he affirms.

Suddenly a bellow for quiet splits the air. I get to a railing just as I hear "Action!" Abruptly, Arnold Schwarzenegger bursts up from the lower level, down near the fungus garden. He's stripped to the waist and painted in alternating bands of camouflage markings. It's my first glimpse of him in the flesh, and impressive flesh it is, indeed. Schwarzenegger looks slimmer than I've lately seen him. Although he is still a massive man, his new form is easier on the eye. Later, I'm told he has augmented his usual pumping-iron routine with swimming and running exercises. Visually, he's a fully believable Conan.

In an instant, Schwarzenegger is in the midst of the orgy actors and actresses, swinging a sword from left to right and moving forward with the grace of a cat. A Neanderthal jumps in front of him and is immediately cut down, bellowing at the top of his lungs. Unimpeded, Schwarzenegger reaches the top of the second staircase, only a few yards from where I stand.

**Sandahl Bergman
in camouflage
makeup rehearses
a sword stunt to be
shot later. I recall
her grace and
beauty from the
"Air Rotica" dance
sequence of Fosse's
ALL THAT JAZZ.**





The main, middle level, of Thusla Doom's Orgy Chamber, designed by Ron Cobb. Of the dominating central pillar, said Cobb: "What would an orgy chamber be without its phallic symbol?" Inset: Schwarzenegger battles one of Doom's Neanderthals.



"Cut!" Schwarzenegger relaxes, drops his sword to his side, straightens up and shakes his shoulder-length hair. I look over to the man who's stopped the scene. He's of medium height, bearded and bearlike, wearing a dark blue sweater with leather patches on his shoulders, dressed in brown Levis and suede Hush Puppies. His hands are in his pockets and he's smiling. Broadly. I recognize him from previous photos. It's John Milius. Obviously, this has been a good take.

Horsman then drags me away to Gil Taylor. Taylor is a large man, with a ruddy, fleshy face and glasses attached by a band around his neck. It's quickly evident that he isn't happy; later, I find it's one of Taylor's last days on the set. He's being replaced by Duke Callaghan, the same photographer with whom Milius worked on *BIG WEDNESDAY*.

A few minutes later I'm being introduced to Sandahl Bergman. She's also in camouflage and is rehearsing a sword stunt for a later shot. I remember her grace and beauty from the "Air Rotica" sequence of *ALL THAT JAZZ*. It's a pleasant surprise to find she's also quite nice. Sandahl declines shaking hands since the make-up

extends to her palms. So I extend a little finger. She laughs and touches it with her forefinger.

Bergman returns to rehearsal, and Horsman leaves for a moment. I stand back and drink in the atmosphere. It's a crowded set—70 to 80 people milling around—yet whenever a shot is started all incidental motion stops, and I notice everyone's attention is riveted on the action. Even with these working professionals, the moment is still magic, and I'm suddenly struck by the illusion of cinema. When I see this sequence in a theater I won't be able to help thinking about the crowd pressing in just beyond the edges of the frame, a crowd no one else will be aware of.

Horsman returns and points out Terry Leonard, a tall, lean whip-saw of a man, dressed in blue jeans and a white shirt, a red bandanna tied around his neck. Leonard has a ruggedly handsome face, which at the moment is screwed in concentration as he runs Schwarzenegger through another stunt (called a "gag" in the on-set idiom). Amusingly, Schwarzenegger the Barbarian, in full costume, is chewing gum. I note he can't be much taller than six feet. The lies of the cinema again; on-screen he looks a lot

taller.

Milius now steps in and shows Schwarzenegger how he wants a certain sword maneuver done. Milius is totally into the scene, enthusiastically yet confidently acting out every move. Someone glides by and mentions that this is one director who really likes to act himself. I also recall reading that at one time Milius was a serious student of *kendo*, a Japanese martial arts discipline involving the use of bamboo swords, dubbed *shinai*. Watching him sinuously weaving an intricate pattern with Schwarzenegger's sword, I can believe both bits of information.

Over the next few days Milius' directorial style reveals itself to be low-keyed and quiet, but totally in control. There are no hysterics and very few flashes of anger. Milius runs a smooth, tight ship. It also

takes me a few days to realize that while I've been appraising Milius, he's also been silently sizing *me* up.

Lunch is called. Everyone but a few technicians streams off the set. As I walk past a working fountain, the lights are shut off. An immediate chill strikes the air; even with the outer temperature in the sunny mid-50s, without this great maze of lights, conditions on this set would be very cold indeed.

Lunch is a loud, boisterous, relaxed affair. Extras, production crew and the stars themselves all eat together under the tents at long wooden tables. It only takes a few minutes to become used to the sight of the bizarrely costumed people around me calmly picking at salads and lentil soup. But the babble of accents and languages—this^{is} a truly international production—still remains on the threshold of



Ron Cobb's hand-painted sign is taped to a door in the Apartamentos to mark the location of the art department.

consciousness.

Considering the logistics of feeding the 200-plus members of the production team, it all runs smoothly. I also note that though Schwarzenegger and the rest of the cast have their own trailers, they're here eating with the rest of the people. Everyone goes on at great lengths about the quality of the food—how good it is compared to other productions. Looking down at my own wilted, suspect salad, I'm thankful I've hit the best.

During lunch I pick up a few more facts and a few more introductions. It comes out that L. Sprague de Camp, although he has submitted a partial manuscript, probably will not be doing the novelization of the film. That assignment seems likely to go to Don Glut, author of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* novelization. I also talk to producer Buzz Feitshans, a neat, amiable man with salt-and-pepper hair, who inquires if I'm being taken care of. Then another bear-like figure, with a greying beard, infectious laugh and sparkling eyes, sits across from me. He pours himself a glass from one of the many bottles of Spanish wine that stand on the table. Someone then introduces me to Ron Cobb.

My first impression of Cobb is that of a likeable throwback, a remnant of the psychedelic age, an energetic, committed figure wreathed in a marvelous aura of humor. It's not long before I realize that he's also imbued with a certain childlike innocence, gentleness and enthusiasm—unaffected traits which remind me very much of suspected similar qualities in Steven Spielberg. Yet beneath Cobb's huggable exterior is a quick, alert mind. His tongue is enviably agile, pouring out a torrent of arresting imagery and complex thought. Over the duration of

my visit I grow to like Cobb and his wife Robin very much.

At one point, Cobb makes the usual statement which seems to accompany any adaptation of a pop hero to the screen—that he's glad the fans aren't doing it. "It's gotten to be a bit monotonous to state this," Cobb says, "but in certain cases it really is better, if you're filming a pre-existing character, not to have had any prior experience with him. Neither John nor I really knew much about Conan before we started all this, and I truly think that's for the better. This way we don't have any pre-conceptions to worry about. If die-hard Conan fans were doing this picture, then I think it would suffer from a more narrow point of view."

Cobb's lack of foreknowledge of the Conan character is apparently held by the majority of the production crew. It's only when I later interview co-star Gerry Lopez that I finally find someone, like myself, who's been a past fan of Howard's incredible Cimmerian.

Cobb, it turns out, is not due for any specific chores this afternoon, so he suggests giving me a tour of the Nave' and its various sets and departments. I'm more than happy to accept. On our way back into the building we stop to watch a few of the American stunt men, who are passing the time by roping a bale of hay on which someone has attached a pair of steer's horns.

As we go back inside, Cobb tells me he's been up most of the previous night working on the Orgy Chamber with Nick Alder; he apologizes for being tired. Yet he still is so pumped full of energy that I find myself literally racing to keep up with him. Cobb first takes me upstairs to the Art Department, where for the next half-hour he shows me the many drawings and paintings he's done to illustrate the

film. While we're rifling through this material, Cobb says that artist William Stout was also working on the production at an early stage and was responsible for many of the early costume concepts, some of which remain in the film.

I come upon a particularly graphic watercolor by Cobb, with Conan slashing a guard in half, gore and intestines splattering everywhere. Is this in the picture? "Unfortunately not," Cobb laughs. "That was just a gag I did for John because I knew he'd like it."

Then it's off to visit the sets. CONAN will utilize 49 sets all told, including a miniature of the city of Shadizar—an important stop in Conan's travels—done in forced perspective. Here at the Nave', most of the sets deal with the interiors of the Tower of Set, which is the temple at Shadizar where Conan and Subotai first encounter Valeria.

Cobb first stops briefly at the Orgy Chamber. I ask him why he has color-keyed the set to a soft pink. He tells me he wanted to incorporate flesh-tones into the orgiastic atmosphere. When I ask him how he came up with the tall, snake-topped column that dominates the area, he says, smiling, "What would an Orgy Chamber be without a phallic symbol?"

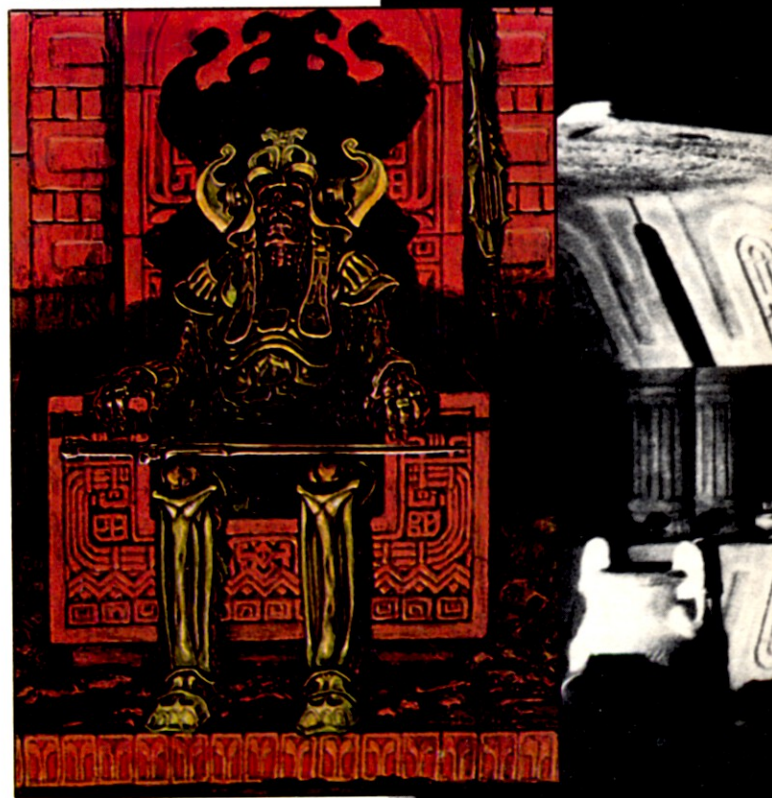
We next scramble through a series of plaster-of-paris caverns, trying not to trip on the cables which

run along the gravel floor. Eventually we come to an area that Cobb calls the Grunge Pit. In the film, this will be a circular, rough-stone area at the bottom of the huge, smokestack-like Temple of Set, into which Conan will descend. Above me, at a height of ten feet, a portion of a full-scale chimney abruptly terminates near the ceiling. The effect is like being in a round bottle with a short neck and the cork removed. "It's not dressed yet," Cobb tells me. "When it is you'll be ankle deep in garbage and decomposing bodies. You see, this is where the Temple's snakes are fed."

A number of tunnels, about three feet off the ground and three feet in diameter, ring the circumference of the set. Cobb explains that these are the tunnels used by the snakes—and later Conan—to enter and leave the feeding area. I squat down in the cold, dimly-lit pit and squint down one of the tunnels, which is thirty feet long and open on one side for filming. This is the tunnel Schwarzenegger will crawl along in order to reach the next set, an impressive two-story structure called the Snake Chamber.

Upon emerging from the tunnel into this chamber, Conan, hidden in deep shadows, will find himself in the midst of a human sacrifice. On a ramp above him Rexor and a band of acolytes will be standing, chanting and burning incense,

Below: Ron Cobb's concept of "The Thing In The Crypt," inspired by the Robert E. Howard story of the same name. Right: The film's amazing full-scale Crypt set, in which Conan discovers the corpse of a huge, long-dead, perhaps Atlantean warrior.



about to push a nubile sacrifice off a projection that hangs like a pirate's plank over the pit. It's not until Conan's eyes adjust to the gloom that he realizes just what the young woman is to be sacrificed to; only a few feet from him, sleeping and coiled about a four-foot high bronze holder containing a fabulous gem, will be a monstrous, hydraulically-controlled, 36-foot-long snake created by Nick Allder.

I notice that the Snake Chamber has been decorated with intricate symbology, with snake, moon and infinity signs worked into the walls. Curious, I ask Cobb how much historical research he's done for the film. "Well," he replies, "John's had some research papers done on snake and assassination cults all up and down through history, which he's embellished upon. But I've sort of kept at arm's length from that kind of scholarship.

"I've tried to dream up numerous stylizations, drawing on everything from Quetzalcoatl to Egyptian symbology and many other designs. I've then combined, refined and repeated those designs all throughout the picture, applying them where necessary. This has resulted in a fair amount of that design history ultimately being obscured to the viewer, and to me too, for that matter. That's interesting, that much of the symbology I'm applying has become a mystery even to me. I think it's much more

important, in the sense of design, to be as original and consistent as possible in this picture and to evoke a sense of mystery and purpose, rather than spell everything out. I don't think that sort of underlining is really necessary."

Two other sets—a pillared section of the Temple and a Crypt where Conan will gain a sword from the mummified body of a huge, long-dead, perhaps Atlantean warrior (a scene Howard fans will recognize as a Milius *homage* to the story "The Thing in the Crypt")—are unlit at the moment. We decide to avoid them. I do, however, walk out onto the sacrificial plank in the Snake Chamber. It's a fair drop to the floor I was just standing on. I joke about whether the company would sacrifice a journalist for a good production. Cobb doesn't say anything. But he smiles.

Back at the Orgy Chamber, Milius is running through another set-up. Cobb excuses himself and hurries off to check a costume element on one of Thulsa Doom's elite guards. Throughout my stay, Cobb is always popping up in the damndest places, okaying props, making costume corrections, always available. A standing joke on the set is that this is the first real job Ron's ever had.

Of course, with all his other film work, that's not quite true. But if CONAN is Cobb's first full-time

work, then during my visit I watch him log a lot of overtime. My last view of Cobb for the day is a memorable one; he's sitting, alone, on a mountain of plush cushions, his back to the beautifully gilded wall of Thulsa Doom's private chamber. A blissfully exhausted grin is on his face. The king in his chambers...

As I'm preparing to leave for the Apartamentos, Milius approaches me on the Orgy set for the first time. He asks how things are going. Both of us are old surfers; we chat over the sport for a minute, and then he's back to work.

A moment after that someone tells me that there was an on-set accident while Cobb and I were off on our tour. During a rehearsal, Sandahl Bergman parried a blow from an opponent's sword stroke. But her weapon had no handle guard, and the other sword slid all the way to her hand and laid her forefinger open to the bone.

Since this is the same finger I touched a short while ago, I feel vaguely guilty about the accident. Luckily, Bergman was not struck by a "real" weapon. Though actual steel weapons *are* used throughout the majority of the film, when a "kill" is called for during shooting a fiberglass one is substituted. But it seems a fiberglass weapon can get to the bone as easily as a real one—six stitches are required to close the cut (ten days later, *Variety* reports that Sandahl

lost her finger. We all have a good laugh at the exaggeration).

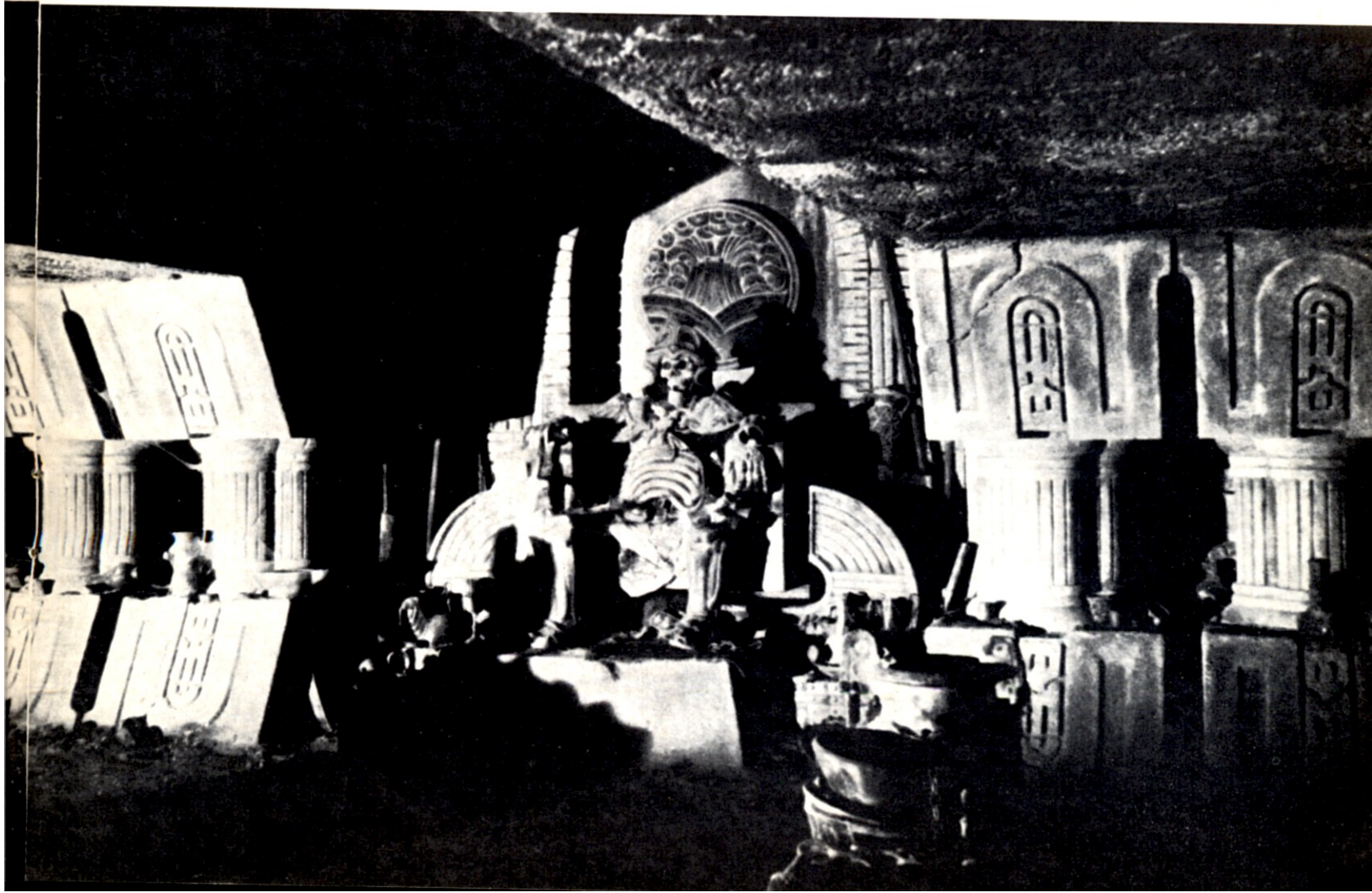
I'm finally done for the day. While waiting for my driver, Terry Leonard introduces himself. His manner is friendly and frank. We exchange some small talk, then I ask him how Bergman is doing. "Fine," he says, "but we were lucky. If Sandahl had been cut on the eye or cheek, we'd be down."

Saturday, Jan. 24

This morning I ride back down to the Nave' with Horsman, Beth Hickman and Bergman. Sandahl's right forefinger is thickly bandaged and still giving her some trouble. But she's going back to the set in the hopes of getting some work in.

During the trip she mentions that the accident had its positive side; she now knows, more than ever, to take her dangerous stunt work seriously. During the day I hear that same statement repeated by a number of people. It's not until lunch that I remember when I first heard it. Milius himself used the phrase the night before. News and views, apparently, spread quickly.

James Earl Jones is being photographed today in Thulsa Doom's private Orgy Chamber for a



sequence when, threatened by Conan's raid for the princess, Doom transforms himself into a snake and slithers away to safety. With his black gown and head-dress, Jones looks the epitome of evil. Yellow contacts have been added to his eyes to suggest the reptilian transformation, and a hidden brace steadies his entire head for the later special effects work (a number of latex masks and prop heads will be used to simulate the metamorphosis).

After lunch, I take the first in what eventually will be a series of all-day (and night) long interviews. My initial talk is with Carlo de Marchis, the film's special makeup effects supervisor. De Marchis was a pupil of Carlo Rambaldi for years before being assigned to the CONAN project. This is the first project on which he's had this sort of position, and added to his natural charm is a tremendous enthusiasm for the film itself. Casually but elegantly dressed, de Marchis is also the warmest man I've yet met on the lot.

Most of de Marchis' CONAN work, it seems, is involved with the violent world the film portrays; namely, he's preparing the various bits of corpses and whole bodies which are scattered throughout the picture. During the next hour de Marchis shows me a number of severed limbs, arms, hands and legs. At the moment he's not quite satisfied with the foam mixture being used for the full-sized body molds, but he assures me it won't be long until a new formula has been put together and tested to his satisfaction (a few days later, it is). Midway through our talk he asks me to come upstairs with him to the special makeup effects department to see one of his pet projects.

Alone in the medium-sized, cluttered room, de Marchis goes over to a table near a large window. Lying amidst the jumble is a false severed human head. As he picks it up, I notice that a number of cables are running from behind its neck (at the bottom of which a bit of jagged spinal cord shows). The cables end at a board onto which a number of manual switches are screwed.

"This is for the point in the story where Conan's mother dies," he tells me. "It is very sad. Thulsa Doom kills her in front of her son. Tell me what you think of it."

He holds the head in his left hand, level with his own face, and throws some switches with his right. The head, bald because its wig is being combed down in the costume department, slowly opens its eyes. They're blue. As the lids half-close and the eyes begin a slow roll, the mouth suddenly drops open and the tongue lolls out. Even here, off-camera, it's a very realistic effect. "Do you like her?" de Marchis asks. "Oh yeah!" I tell him. After all, this is what I've come to Spain to see. De Marchis' mouth is



Valerie Quinnessen as the Princess of Shadizar, a prisoner in Thulsa Doom's Orgy Chamber who fails to appreciate her daring rescue at the hands of Conan.

split by an enormous grin. He's hugely enjoying himself.

The next interview is my first with a cast member. Valerie Quinnessen, who portrays a kidnapped princess who'd much rather stay with her captors, asks if it would be all right to talk in her trailer ("You must call it a caravan now that you are in Europe," she tells me). She and I are joined at the trailer's tiny table by her friend Francois. As Quinnessen is waiting for an on-set call and is dressed in a highly revealing costume, I make a mental note to keep my eyes on the beautiful freckles which dust the bridge of her nose, just below her large, grey-green eyes. I find myself breaking this promise. Repeatedly.

A vital, intelligent young woman, Quinnessen is definitely more than a mere sex symbol. She tells me she comes from a strong background in Parisian theater, and was, at one time, the lead singer for a French new-wave band. Her first film was FRENCH POSTCARDS, in which she played a superficially bitchy Parisian native who eventually falls for a young, naive American exchange student played by Miles Chapin (THE FUNHOUSE).

Quinnessen is also politically committed, to the left, and speaks with a great deal of passion and knowledge far in excess of her relatively youthful age. As with the majority of CONAN's company,

she is also quite friendly, and she and Francois become other personal favorites during my stay. I'm also drawn to her and her friend because I sense that they, like I, are newcomers to the company and haven't quite been absorbed into the CONAN family yet.

"On one level," Valerie says, "I realize the basic appeal of my character is her body. But the totality of the CONAN film is really much more than that. When I first read the script, I thought it was just a matter of swordfighting. But when I read the books, I found they were filled with sorcery, and I liked that very much. I've always loved fairy tales. And I've always believed that, just around the corner, magic truly does exist. Human magic. So I like the fantasy angle in CONAN very much."

Though it's getting late in the afternoon, and though the interviews have been averaging over an hour apiece, there's still time for two more talks. CONAN is shooting on a six-day-a-week schedule; full activity usually begins about 10 a.m. and winds down by 7 p.m., although key personnel such as Schwarzenegger and Milius are invariably on-set both earlier and later. Horsman asks me who I'd like to talk to next. I opt for Nick Alder.

Alder, born in Britain in 1943, is CONAN's special effects supervi-

sor. Over the years his work has become legendary, with various television programs, films like KHARTOUM and a number of old Hammer pictures only a fraction of his credits. Alder's efforts recently culminated in a 1978 special effects Academy Award for ALIEN (an award he's fiercely proud of; he's constantly wearing a miniature, golden Oscar on a chain around his neck).

In person, I find Alder is cordial and intense, possessed with a near palpable energy level. He's also acquainted with CINEFANTASTIQUE. "I have them sent to me in England," he says, before taking me on a quick guided tour of his effects domain. Like most such facilities, the CONAN effects workshop resembles nothing more than a combination warehouse, carpenter's, plasterer's and metalsmith's shop. Cogs, gears, and bits of aluminum and plastic are everywhere.

And Alder, as with virtually all of the CONAN technical crew, is eager to showcase his labors. He first picks up a short, thoroughly wicked-looking sword. "This is one of those fiberglass things you were asking about," he says. "Watch." He cuts at a human torso set on wheels in front of us; as the tip of the blade passes along its chest, a realistic spurt of blood trails behind its track.

"The trick is in the handle," he says, pointing. "We've got a tube running off-camera through the bottom of the shaft that supplies the blood. When you squeeze the handle, it comes out in a nice even flow. And we're improving on it. Right now we're manufacturing a number of swords with a CO₂ cartridge and its own blood supply built directly into the sword itself. That should give John more latitude in filming some of the fight scenes." When I rap on the sword's blade and tell him it feels stronger than ordinary fiberglass, Alder nods his head. "That's right. We've used carbon fibers in them. That lends an extraordinary toughness to the material."

Alder is also in charge of the film's many physical effects, including a number of on-set mechanical contrivances. One of these is being tested near the door to the shop. Two men are fitting a costumed, headless torso onto the head and shoulders of a third man for yet another decapitation scene. During shooting, the rig will be worn by a much shorter extra, who will be looking through a hole in the torso at an area approximately level with the false body's navel.

The shop man is strapped into the rig. He is a strange sight, well over six feet high, with a gory stump protruding from the blood-splattered costume. As with de Marchis' head, cables run from the false body's back. Alder asks for a test. A switch is thrown, and a moment later the torso's arms twitch up and

its hands claw at the air above its neck. Alder, however, isn't completely satisfied; he thinks the motion is a bit stiff. As we walk away, the technicians begin prodding at the arms again.

CONAN's most spectacular mechanical effect, however, is its colossal hydraulic snake. Built at a cost of approximately £20,000, it is so long that it must be kept in a curled "u"-shape for storage in the shop. At the moment it's mostly a gleaming skeleton, as its latex skin has yet to be applied. Only its head—with a forked, extendable, pneumatically-operated tongue and two large fangs which can fold down from their cavities in the upper jaw while simultaneously extruding venomous gobs of KY jelly—is currently complete.

Ron Cobb suddenly materializes out of nowhere, petting one of the many stray cats which, along with a few stray dogs, seem to be the true tenants of the Nave'. The animal purrs contentedly; Cobb smiles. Green and gold highlights wink off the serpent's head while Alder explains the genesis of the giant serpent.

"When I was first given this assignment, I tried to hit upon a new basis for this type of hydraulic creature," Alder says. "I was mulling over the skeletal structure of a snake one day when I had an inspiration; why not substitute each of the muscles which would normally be attached to a skeleton with a cable? At the very least, this seemed worth trying, because this way we'd be able to come up with a naturalistic movement it had been very difficult to achieve in the past on this type, and size, of animal. And I think it came out well.

"For example, we're able to make this snake rear *straight up* from a prone position until its head is 12 feet off the floor, all by dint of its internal machinery. It's also very strong; you could put a full-grown man on the neck just behind the head and it would *still* be able to stand up. I'm proud of it, and I think that the point in the film where it suddenly rears up behind CONAN in the Snake Chamber is going to be quite a shocking one."

Cobb nods and walks off with his cat.

By this time, shooting is wrapped for the day, most of it devoted to various crane shots of Arnold, Sandahl, Valerie and Gerry running down the Orgy Chamber's steps after their successful raid. I notice Buzz Feitshans is standing alone in a corner and decide this would probably be a good time to squeeze in another interview. He agrees, and we retire to his trailer, which he shares with co-producer Raffaella De Laurentiis. As befitting their places in the CONAN pecking order, their trailer is among the most comfortable on the lot.

Feitshans' biography is a pleasant surprise, revealing a man

whose production of a project like CONAN seems a natural step in light of his past filmic history. Born in Los Angeles, raised in California, Feitshans attended USC and received a degree in education. After graduation, he then secured a position in the editing department of the UPA Cartoon Studio, where he worked on the now-famous Gerald McBoing-Boing and Mr. Magoo cartoons. After UPA, Feitshans held positions at both ABC and an international film distribution firm before finally landing at American International Pictures, "in the heyday of their Corman cycle," as he puts it.

Again working as an editor, Feitshans had a hand in a great number of AIP projects, including THE WILD ANGELS and THE RAVEN. At the same time he was also meeting and mingling with a number of up-and-coming AIP talents, people who were later to have a profound influence on international cinema: Jack Nicholson, Peter Bogdanovich, Martin Scorsese, Francis Coppola and John Milius. In fact, Milius' first directorial effort, DILLINGER, was also Feitshans' first credit as producer. Feitshans has since produced BIG WEDNESDAY, HARD-CORE and 1941 before moving on to CONAN.

After a sip of bottled water, which virtually everyone here drinks to ward off the dreaded *turistas*, I ask Feitshans for the official line behind the genesis of the CONAN production. "When John finished BIG WEDNESDAY," Feitshans begins, "we were all set to do another project called HALF THE SKY, a mountain-man picture. But we were also tossing around other projects. Now John had always wanted to do a fantasy project, so he suggested CONAN. I then went out and looked up the rights, finding they had just been purchased by another producer, Ed Pressman. At this point, we called up Pressman and asked if he would be interested in joining forces to do the film.

"Ed agreed to come over and talk about it, but eventually it became apparent that there were some points that we couldn't seem to work out to our mutual satisfaction. So we sort of left it. This was in 1978. After this, Ed kept trying to put the project together with other people, at which time Oliver Stone did a script for him. At this point, John became re-interested, so we again talked with Pressman, and this time some previous points were now amenable to everyone. So we decided to get together again and see if we could get CONAN off the ground.

"In the meantime, how-

ever, we had a commitment with Dino De Laurentiis, who was going to be the executive producer on HALF THE SKY. We talked about this among ourselves and then went to Dino and said, 'Will you substitute CONAN for the previous film?' Dino was willing, so he negotiated with Ed to secure the rights, and that's how this CONAN was born."

What about the Oliver Stone script, as opposed to Milius' subsequent screenplay? "John's script doesn't bear much resemblance to Stone's version," Feitshans replies. "There are some very rough similarities, but our shooting script is really dissimilar to Stone's in just about all respects. For one thing, John's slotted his scenario into a very interesting position—an origin story. The only part of CONAN's life that Howard and all the other CONAN writers didn't really put down on paper were the beginnings of Conan's life. That gives John's script a very nice extra dimension, I think."

A few minutes later shooting wraps for the day, and Milius, Horsman and I pile into a cab for the long ride home. During the trip the sun goes down. Astonishingly, as we pass what looks to be a bombed out ruin, someone lights a candle within and a distorted human shadow looms out behind the glassless, screenless window. I remind myself that, once out of the cities, Spain is a poor country, and my conscience tweaks at the image of the hot bath I'm anticipating back at the Apartamentos.

During most of the ride, Milius and Horsman endlessly go on about joint obsessions—guns, skeet shooting and hunting. Yet their talk is not a fanatical NRA diatribe; it's more like a pair of athletes passionately describing their shared sport. As we near the lights of Madrid, the conversation

changes. Milius has begun to visibly unwind. It's not long before he begins to recount several affectionate, hilarious reminiscences about his (and others') past films, slipping into letter-perfect Ben Johnson (whom he directed in DILLINGER) and Brando imitations.

Milius is an excellent raconteur; by the time we're riding the elevator up to our rooms, he has most of the passengers helpless with laughter. He launches into a scene from APOCALYPSE NOW (which he wrote) between Brando and the Dennis Hopper character, alternately taking on both parts and breaking everyone up. Just before I get out, he suddenly asks when I'm going to interview him. "You're going to be the last one," I say.

Two minutes into that long-awaited tub, the phone rings. Horsman tells me that he, Beth and I are going out to dinner tonight with Terry Leonard and Sandahl Bergman. Can I be down in the lobby in an hour? Eyeing my dripping legs I tell him an hour-and-a-half. Two hours later we're all at one of Madrid's most fashionable Italian restaurants.

It's a loose, infectiously giggly evening. Since this is Saturday—Sunday being the one day of the week when everyone tries to forget as much about CONAN and moviemaking as possible—the wine flows freely and everyone is in high spirits. It seems a shame to

Nick Alder shows me his 36-foot hydraulic snake. At the moment, it's mostly a gleaming skeleton, as its latex skin has yet to be stretched on.



have to finally get down to the business of interviewing Terry Leonard, but we do. Sandahl, Horsman and Beth, however, are enjoying themselves so much that they hardly notice us.

Stunting for over 15 years, Terry Leonard has gradually become a living legend, one of the most well-known, sought-after and respected stuntmen and second-unit directors in the business. Born in 1940, Leonard first entered pictures in 1962 as a local extra for the John Wayne/Maureen O'Hara film *McCLINTOCK*, which was shot on location near where Leonard was attending the University of Arizona. Among his other credits, Leonard has worked on a number of films scripted and/or written by Milius, including *DILLINGER*, *THE WIND AND THE LION* and *THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JUDGE ROY BEAN* (in which he had a bit part as a desperado whom Paul Newman killed early in the picture).

Leonard then directed the second unit on both *BIG WEDNESDAY* and the underrated Milius/Spielberg co-production *USED CARS*. His latest work is visible in *THE LEGEND OF THE LONERANGER*. As for *CONAN*, Leonard is again the official second-unit director, as well as the picture's stunt coordinator.

I ask Leonard if *CONAN*'s large helpings of close physical combat haven't caused him some headaches. "Well," he admits, "this is a

real unique picture. One reason it's so different is because of the physical limitations of the actors and actresses. By that I *don't* mean that they're having trouble with the large amounts of stunt work they have to handle. Not at all. In fact, all these people—Sandahl with her dancing, Arnold with his weights and Gerry with his surfing—are world-class champion athletes, and they're just doing an incredible job on the film.

"The physical limitations," Leonard continues, "only come in when you think about the fact that you're just not going to find anyone in the *world* to double Arnold. Especially when he's in a loin cloth. That causes a whole slew of problems.

"You've got to be convincing, too. Now, sword routines are similar to fight routines—they're all camera angles. Knowing where to put your camera so you can keep everyone safe and at the same time absolutely *convince* people you've just run somebody through is obviously the most important thing going. If you're off by as little as half an inch on the set, it's going to look like *feet* on the big screen.

"Finally, you've got to be careful," Leonard concludes. "This is a violent movie, no two ways about it. Obviously, you can't hit anybody with the swords we've been using." Bergman suddenly leans over and waggles her injured finger in his face. "Except Sandahl," Leonard says.

Everyone laughs.

Monday, Jan. 26

This morning I'm awoken by an early call. It appears that Duke Callaghan (the cinematographer who replaced Gil Taylor) will be having his first session on the set today. I'm asked if I'd mind not being there, as things are going to be reorganized and accordingly re-adjusted for him. I realize it's going to be a very hectic day for all concerned, and that I really haven't much choice in the matter. So I agree, and immediately go back to sleep for a few extra hours.

I decide to spend the day sight-seeing, wandering through the Prado and Madrid's own version of Disneyland called, appropriately enough, the *Parques de Attracciones*. By early evening I'm back in my room preparing for a late-night dinner (in Spain, dinner is usually *begun* between 10 p.m. and *midnight*). I'm to dine with Ron Cobb and Robin, his wife.

We eat in yet another Italian restaurant deep in the old quarter of Madrid. In many ways this dinner is the antithesis of my previous date with Bergman and Leonard; it is quieter and much more restrained. However, Robin proves herself a marvelous, straightforward wit, a breath of pure fresh air after the usual tainted atmosphere of gossip and politics which attends the making of any film. Somewhere in the middle of the *fettuchini* I click on the recorder.

Ron Cobb was born in 1937, in Los Angeles, and grew up in Burbank (he and Feitshans are among the company's few genuinely native Californians). Although not formally trained in art, Cobb began drawing and painting at a very early age. After being discharged from the Army in 1964, he decided to ignore certain personal reservations and put together a one-man exhibit of his paintings and drawings, an exhibit which eventually found its way to the old Encore Theater on Melrose and Van Nuys Avenue in Los Angeles. Appropriately enough, one patron who first saw, appreciated and remembered Cobb's work was a young John Milius.

Cobb then went on to become one of the best known social satirists/political cartoonists of the radical '60s. His drawings were initially displayed in the *L. A. Free Press* and then quickly syndicated throughout the country, and the world, by a network of "underground" papers. During later travels, Cobb met his future wife, Robin Love, in Australia. Cobb's filmic associations began with design work for *STAR WARS* and *ALIEN*. His last film work involved designing the interior of the mothership for the conclusion of the revised version of *CE3K*. I mention to Cobb that I thought that interior sequence was a bit obscure.

"Well," explains Cobb, "when Dreyfuss is looking up at the interior of the Mothership, he's seeing a titanic chandelier of UFO's at the top of the ship. That's what that glittering, upside-down Christmas tree was: thousands of UFO's. I'd come up with the idea that the Mothership had no power, in itself; the UFO's flew the Mothership. So they had to gather inside it, all of them flying in through slits at the top and parking in this huge swarm. Then these petals come down around the UFO's and click into place; the "ceiling" Dreyfuss first saw on entering the ship, which by now has levitated to the chandelier, also snaps in at the bottom of the petals. Then the UFO's turn on their engines, all at once. You get this enormous shower of energy, like power spilling out of a titanic shower head, and the Mothership's ready to take off."

After clearing up that mystery, Cobb then begins to unravel his initial involvement with the Bar-

barian from Cimmeria.

"Around the time of *THE WIND AND THE LION*," Cobb begins. "John had commissioned a painting from me. And when I was over in England working on *ALIEN*, he got in touch again and said, 'Look, I'd really like you to design a picture for me.' And I told him I'd love to. So when I got back from *ALIEN*, John called and said, 'Now, let's do it.' So I said, 'Great, what do you have in mind?'"

"It turned out he wanted to do a big mountain-man picture, an epic sort of thing titled *HALF THE SKY*, which you've already heard about. Now I'd really never done anything like that before, but I told him I'd love to grapple with the problem and see what I could come up with. John, though, was going on vacation for a month, some sort of hunting expedition, and so I was told to sit tight, and then we'd get cracking on it. Which was fine by me.

"Then, after John had gone, I was contacted by Ed Pressman's people about *CONAN*. What they essentially said was that after all this time it looked as if they were finally going to do it, and would I be interested in working on the film in some capacity? I said I was interested, but that I was already committed to John and waiting for him to come back. Pressman's people countered with the offer of whether I'd like to do some temporary designs for them, just for a couple of weeks.

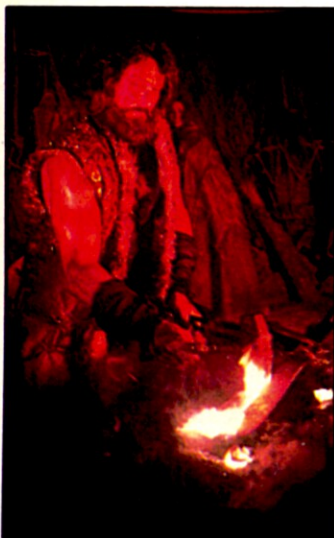
"So, anyway, that sounded all right. I went in and met Ed Pressman, read Oliver Stone's script and saw some interesting possibilities. Now, at the time I really didn't know that much about *CONAN*. I did know Frazetta's drawings of him, and I had read some of the comics. So I guess I was reasonably familiar with the character without reading any of the Howard novels or novelettes. But I certainly saw design possibilities in what I'd read.

"So I started doing a series of paintings and drawings and, eventually, that sort of petered out. John then came back, I left *CONAN*, and we started on *HALF THE SKY*. I worked on that for about two months, did a whole series of paintings. All this time, however, we kept hearing about *CONAN*, which was apparently gaining steam again. At this point it looked as though Oliver Stone was going to direct it, too. But as time went by that particular proposition started to look a little shaky.

"By now John had become more and more interested in *CONAN*. Finally, there came a time when John also saw all my previous *CONAN* artwork and read the final version of Stone's script and got all excited about the character. The whole idea of the project really appealed to him, because it had such impact—it was brash, roman-

Had breakfast with Falconetti, alias Big Bill Smith, who plays Conan's dad. Smith is the best, most crazed, over-the-edge villain in the film business.





tic and shocking, all the things John loves. I think he saw the concept as a romantic fantasy, couched within a simple and intense argument for the rugged individual as opposed to sophisticated civilization. Then he realized he *had* to do CONAN, that nobody could make that picture but him. So John called Pressman, Pressman was delighted, Dino was too, and, suddenly, I was back on CONAN again. And I've been working on him ever since."

The conversation goes on for nearly two hours, with Cobb variously discussing Stone's script ("very expensive"), one of CONAN's personal appeals ("to be able to create a realistic, believable prehistory") and why, on the bottom line, he likes to draw ("to be able to invent something that doesn't exist").

After the excellent meal is over, we walk the ancient, late-night streets back to our cab. On the drive home we cruise by the city's opera house and Parliament building, where, a few weeks from this night, a band of disgruntled right-wing officers will hold the nation's government by the throat, only to fail in their coup. Tonight, however, the Parliament is quiet and

deserted. Only the moon touches the building's steps after our car whispers by.

Tuesday, Jan. 27

It's an *incredible* day on the set, but it all begins with interviews.

Early this morning Horsman and I travel to the Euro Building for a talk with William Smith. Without a doubt, Big Bill Smith is the best, most crazed, absolutely stone-cold-over-the-edge villain in the business. Although recent films like EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE (in which he played Clint Eastwood's final sparring partner) and now CONAN (in which he plays the film's noble patriarch) are pushing him to a more heroic image, true Smith connoisseurs remember him as an outrageously dangerous heavy, kicking and stomping his way through the likes of such gems as RUN, ANGEL, RUN, THE DEADLY TRACKERS, THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR, DARKER THAN AMBER (his favorite heavy role) and also TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING.

Indeed, Smith's best known villain, Falconetti of TV's RICH MAN, POOR MAN, today is causing him some trouble; the film has just been re-released on Spanish television, and during our interview Smith is constantly besieged for autographs, pictures and even another interview (when Smith recently went to South Africa to promote the miniseries, he stepped off the plane to find a mob of 25,000 fans rushing him).

Born on a cattle ranch in Missouri in 1931, William Smith went to California with the rest of his family during the Depression and grew up in the San Fernando Valley. At odds with his later screen image is the fact that Smith is a scholar; he speaks five languages, received a Master's degree in Russian, and cites Dostoyevsky as his favorite author.

Smith's film career began as a four-year-old extra in 1935. He continued to work as an extra until 1951, when he got his first bit-part in a John Derek (Bo's husband) quickie called SATURDAY'S HERO. Smith's first featured role was in 1959's THE MATING GAME; 1967 saw him starring in RUN, ANGEL, RUN, the story of a biker trying to go straight. From

Below: Ron Cobb's preproduction concept of the Master bequeathing his sword to his young son, Conan. Inset Top: The Master (William Smith) fashions the sword. Effects man Nick Alder built a fully operational forge for this scene, fueled by bottled gas. Inset Bottom: The Master leads young Conan (J. L. Santiago Montoya) to the mountaintop and passes on his wisdom of the riddle of steel: the one thing you can trust—not man, not woman, not beast—is steel.





Ron Cobb's 1978 preproduction painting for producer Edward R. Pressman



At dinner with production designer Ron Cobb and wife Robin I'm filled-in on CONAN's long genesis as a film project. Robin is bright and witty.

there it's been steadily uphill.

Since Smith is one of the people I've truly been looking forward to meeting on this film, we spend a lot of time talking about anything that comes to my head. Energetic, fidgety, almost hyper, Smith nevertheless manages to keep us laughing with a string of priceless anecdotes. One occurred on the set of *THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR*, a film with Yul Brynner and Max Von Sydow and Smith battling over the remnants of a post-holocaust New York. After Smith had been laid down in the bottom of a pit for his death scene, enterprising director Robert Clouse came up with the idea of having rats crawl over his face. Peanut butter and Karo syrup were then smeared on Smith's false beard, the camera was over-cranked for a slow-motion shot, and the trained rats were released on the actor. Whereupon one of them

promptly defecated in Smith's open mouth. Adding insult to injury, Smith had to watch the process all over again during the next day's rushes—this time in slow-motion.

I finally manage to get us back on the CONAN track. "My son's a great Conan aficionado," Smith says. "He's read all the books. So after I'd talked to John about the picture, I promptly read three or four of them myself. But I couldn't find Conan's father in any of them. Later John explained that he'd put the character of The Master into his script because he felt Conan needed some background.

"In the same vein, the script that John had written was magnificent. How he managed to extract that kind of screenplay from the pulps I just don't know. I don't mean to put down the original stories, but really, John's script is a remarkable



Conan dispatches the sub-human sentry of the Temple of Set. This scene is not in the new Milius script (now Subotai kills the sentry) and Cobb has revamped his design.

achievement.

"Anyway, although the Master really only has one big scene in the picture—when he's standing with his young son on a mountaintop and bequeathing his sword to him—it's a tough one. It's been a tough scene for me and John, too, because there are so many things in there he wants to establish. Absolute nobility, for one, the strength of Conan and the personal contact between father and son. That scene's also the core of the film, I think, because Conan is taught by his father that the only thing you can trust—not man, not woman, not beast—is steel. And that sets up the underlying riddle of steel, the enigma which continues throughout the film and that Conan unravels at its climax."

The remainder of the morning is taken up by two more interviews, one with John Bloomfield, who

shares CONAN's costume designer credit with Ron Cobb, and, finally, one with James Earl Jones.

Jones was born on January 17th, 1931, and considers himself "an actor who loves movies." His first leading role was in a 1960 off-Broadway play called *THE PRETENDER*. Jones amplifies many of the statements he made during our previous taxi-ride; I also find he's been reading everything from *Mein Kampf* to *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in preparation for his characterization of Thulsa Doom. Jones becomes totally involved with the interview, his voice and gestures becoming more and more hypnotic. After we're finished, I realize that I've just been treated to a one-man show, the finest performance by an interviewee during my entire stay.

John Bloomfield, born in 1942, tells me that over 3,000 costumes

have been designed for CONAN. His previous credits include the Terence Stamp television version of *THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD* and *THE FIENDISH PLOT OF DR. FU MANCHU*, Peter Sellers' last film. Bloomfield's main area of interest, however, remains the London Theater. I point out the true beauty of the costumes and he laughs wryly.

"We have people on the set who, when they have nothing else to do, make our costumes *dirty*," he tells me. "They take mud, paint, sandpaper and cheese graters to make everything look old and used." Looking at the soft furs, gleaming silver and supple leather surrounding me, I feel something of Bloomfield's own emotion.

The interviews are intriguing. However, what's going on at the set today is amazing. It's the first full-blown example I've yet been

exposed to of the ferocity of CONAN, and it's fascinating. Milius has set up a long, terrific fight sequence between Schwarzenegger and two of Thulsa Doom's henchmen, played by Ben Davidson and Sven Ole Thorsen, a massive Scandanavian weight-lifter and karate expert. If ten percent of what I see is captured on the screen, no one's going to be leaving the theater for popcorn.

Milius has been shooting action sequences throughout the day. In the morning an arrow was shot across the Orgy chamber right into the eye of a Carlo de Marchis false head-and-torso. Another accident occurred; during one shot Schwarzenegger dropped to his knee and used his sword to block a heavy downward blow from Ben Davidson's axe. But something went wrong, and the axe-head broke off and grazed past Arnold's neck, tak-

ing a fair sized patch of skin with it. For days afterwards, extra make-up has to be applied to the resulting large scab in order to conceal the wound.

But the topper is the three way fight that takes up most of the afternoon. Schwarzenegger, Davidson and Thorsen do everything possible to slice each other up, swinging swords at each other's heads, parrying, thrusting, rolling on their shoulders to escape the blows. Clouds of smoke fill the area, pumped from hand-held units whose vapors burn the throat for hours after the last shot.

Milius wants some further atmosphere to get his actors in the mood. Classical music, punctuated by shouting choirs, suddenly thumps from loudspeakers supported in the rafters. Thorsen picks up a giant, wooden, iron-studded

hammer, which must weigh over 40 pounds, and swings it at Schwarzenegger's head. Arnold ducks, the hammer crunches into the central pillar, and Schwarzenegger then slams his shoulder into Thorsen's midriff. Thorsen goes down, but Davidson is right behind him, swinging a huge sword at Arnold's legs. Schwarzenegger jumps up, the sword whistles harmlessly beneath him, and a moment later Davidson himself is rolling head over heels after Schwarzenegger's sword handle butts into his chest.

"Cut!"

A few minutes later, Milius wanders over to me while his assistants hurriedly redress the set. "Wasn't that Frazetta?" he asks. He's smiling again.

Today I notice a slim, small Oriental guiding much of the chor-

eographed action. This is Kiyoshi Yamazaki, under whose supervision Sandahl Bergman, Gerry Lopez and Schwarzenegger have been practicing their *kendo* and sword work. From what I can see, today he's contributing as much as Terry Leonard and Milius.

Between the fighting, various other activities are going on around the fringes of the set. A snake handler and his assistant arrive. They confer with James Earl Jones as to which reptile he'd like to wear around his neck for a sequence immediately following the raid on the Orgy Chamber. One handler gives Jones a thin, graceful serpent and tells him to chant "Aum" to keep it calm. It's a bizarre sight: Jones and this Spanish snake procurer humming to a handful of reptiles. It's so bizarre it doesn't even dawn on me until later just how funny it is.

Ron Cobb wanders by, bewailing the damage done to his once beautiful Orgy Chamber. "Look at that," he says mock-sorrowfully, pointing down to the scarred and dirty surface beneath our feet. "It looks like the floor of a Greyhound station." Milius then comes over again and notices the Gnome Press Conan hardback I've been having the cast and crew autograph as I do the interviews. He tells me that

John Belushi has an entire run of these out-of-print editions in his own home.

The high point comes towards the end of the day. Sven Ole Thorsen, waiting to be called for another set-up, stands alone on the sidelines. His massive arms are crossed and he's staring straight ahead, at nothing in particular. Then one of the Spanish assistant directors drifts over to Sven's side. The assistant also stands there without striking up a conversation, watching Milius set up a shot.

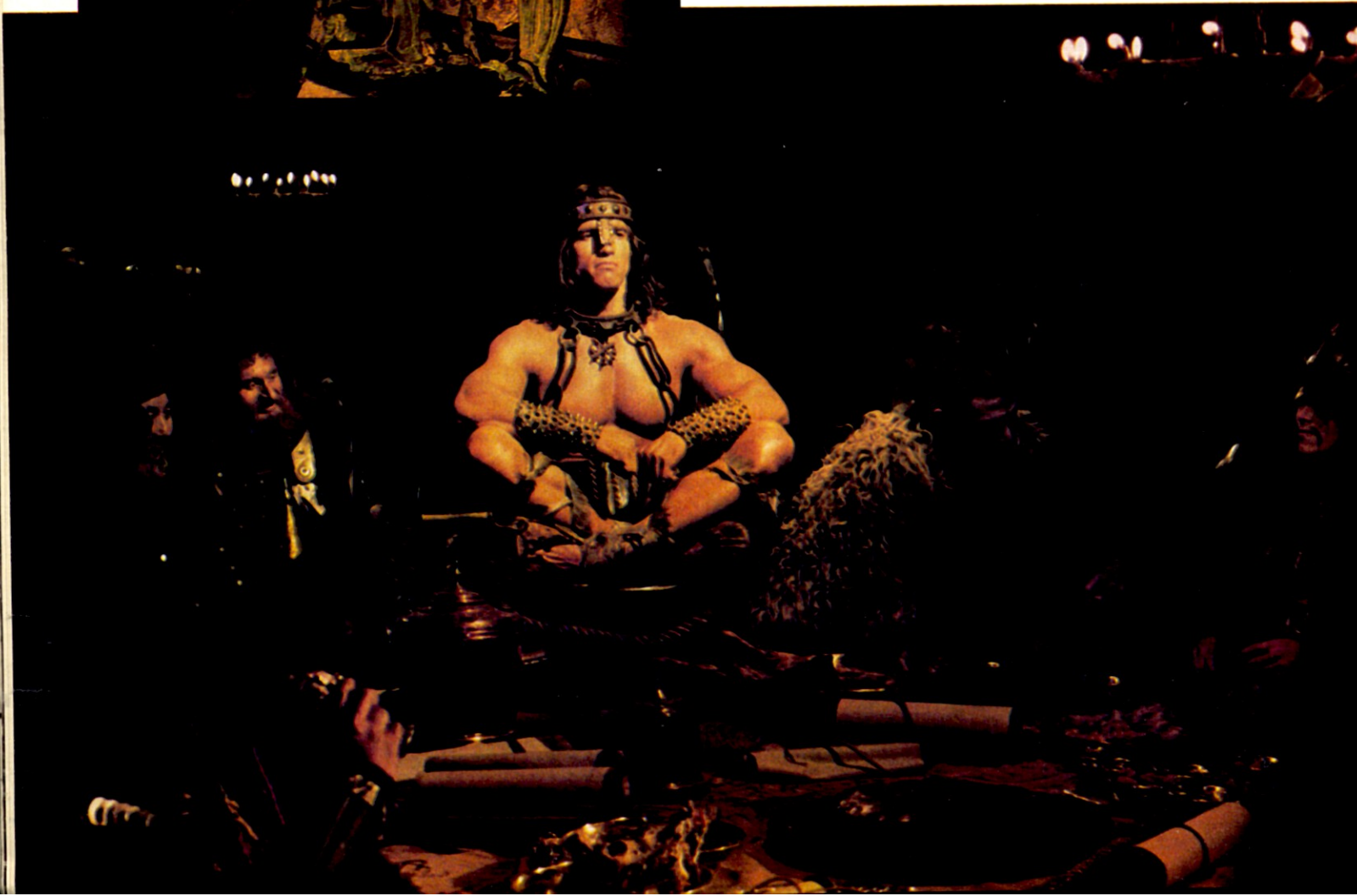
Suddenly, from out of nowhere, Sven produces a thick railroad spike about 8" long and an inch thick. Still silent, still staring off into space, he grabs the spike in both hands and slowly, surely, bends it in half. Then he calmly turns to the astonished assistant, hands the now U-shaped spike to the man, and walks away. Without a word.

Wednesday, Jan. 28

Today I talk to Schwarzenegger, the star of the film. But first I spend some time with a few more of the special effects people.

My first interview is with Peter

Below: Inside a war-yurt, Conan (Arnold Schwarzenegger), a slave and champion pit fighter, is summoned by a counsel of generals for his advice and knowledge of battle. Inset: Conan claims the sword of the long-dead "Thing In The Crypt."





Left: Modelmaker Emilio Ruiz holds two unpainted plaster components of the Temple of Set miniature. An assistant in the background paints a miniature hut for the city of Shadizar. Right: A larger, unpainted plaster component of the Temple of Set.

Voysey, who is credited as CONAN's special effects sculptor. "Voysey is the best sculptor for films in all of England," Carlo de Marchis has told me. When I walk into the small area Voysey calls his own, he's working on a clay head of James Earl Jones for the snake transformation; the head looks more like a seal or a monkey at this point.

Voysey tells me that for the transformation sculpture a life mask first was taken of Jones. Various snake masks were then modeled over this first mask, so that the ensuing transformation would believably follow the contours of the actor's head. Born in 1933, having previously worked on ALIEN, FLASH GORDON and SUPERMAN, Voysey looks a bit like rock-star Peter Townsend; he's also terribly shy.

I then speak with Colin Arthur, who has just arrived on the picture. A pixie-ish man, with an impish sense of humor, Arthur once worked with Stuart Freeborn in developing the ape makeup for the "Dawn of Man" episode in 2001, an assignment which lasted 20 months. He was also called in on ALIEN to work out some kinks involving the sequence where the robotic Ash has his head knocked from his shoulders. For CONAN, Arthur is at this point busily involved with preparing body molds for the various dummy corpses which crop up throughout. He and an assistant are preparing these bodies while we talk. During the entire interview, the mold for a small baby (who's also a victim in the film) lays at my feet.

However, the most satisfying of my special effects interviews is yet to come. This talk is with Emilio Ruiz, born in 1923, who is the picture's model maker. Ruiz is truly an unsung hero in the world of filmic miniatures. Questioning him

through an interpreter (Ruiz speaks as little English as I do Spanish), I find that he's been producing models since 1941 for Italian, Spanish, German and American films. Some of those titles include DR. ZHIVAGO, NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA, SOLOMON AND SHEBA and all of the Phillip Yordan produced-in-Spain films, including CRACK IN THE WORLD. After CONAN, Ruiz will be handling the miniatures for the upcoming TAI-PAN.

Ruiz has his own workshop for producing the CONAN miniatures and his own crew. Three sisters, all sculptors, sit in a row before a work bench, producing exquisitely detailed clay models of tiny huts. These will be used in the miniature city of Shadizar, as will the four-foot-high castle of King Osric, the film's most impressive model, which dominates one end of the shop. A young man pours hot rubber into the mold of an ornamental snake which will decorate the top of a miniature Tower of Set. And off in a corner a plasterer and carpenter also labor on other Ruiz designs.

Ruiz tells me that there will be a total of eight main miniatures used throughout CONAN. Ruiz and his crew also built a life-sized water wheel for the film. I wander about picking up marvelous, tiny people and homes. The atmosphere here in this kingdom of the small is warm and comfortable; with the three sisters giggling away at some private joke, I feel like I've stepped into an elves' workshop.

Back on the set, just before lunch, one of the unit's still photographers, Bob Penn, takes a few shots of me on the Orgy Chamber set. One of these is a gag photo; he has me lie down on some cushions while a half-naked Neanderthal holds a sword at my throat. "Look worried," he says. That isn't hard;

it's a real sword, and the point of the damn thing's nearly buried in my neck.

After a few more pictures I watch the filming of one of the more spectacular stunts in the film. Milius is picking up the action after Sven Ole Thorsen's giant hammer has crunched into the pillar. Weakened by this impact, the pillar is to fall over like a felled tree, with part of it striking Ben Davidson and knocking him out.

The actors take their places. Off to one side I can see Nick Allder. He has a strained look on his face. Although I and the rest of the production crew have total confidence in his talents, there's always the chance of another accident. No one can be completely sure that the pillar will fall exactly as planned.

But it does. The cameras roll, the column goes down with a loud thud, and it's a perfect shot. While everyone is talking excitedly about its effectiveness, I walk over and look at where the pillar has struck the simulated marble flooring. The column is so heavy it has punched right through the stage. I look up. Allder is now grinning.

During lunch I sit at a table with Schwarzenegger, and after the meal we decide to get on with his interview. We retire to his trailer. Once seated he offers me a flask of bottled water and a packet of vitamin pills. This far into my visit I should be inured to surprises, but once again I'm impressed with the quality of people involved with this film. Schwarzenegger reveals himself to be the antithesis of a muscle-bound animal. For two hours I'm in the presence of a dedicated, intelligent, polite and articulate man. One of the strongest impressions I come away with is that, in the vernacular, Schwarzenegger is nobody's fool; in terms of business and image, he's very, very sharp.

Arnold Schwarzenegger was

Emilio Ruiz shows me miniatures under construction. As I wander about picking up his marvelous, tiny models, I feel like I've stepped into an elves' workshop.

born July 30, 1947, in Graz, Austria. He first became involved in sports at the age of three through the urgings of his father, who was also an athlete. Schwarzenegger then began working out with weights at the age of 15; by the time he was 18 years old he had started competing in the sport.

By 1975 Schwarzenegger had become one of the world's most honored bodybuilders, winning the Mr. Universe title five times and the Mr. Olympia title seven times. Schwarzenegger also won an impressive number of other power and weight-lifting championships, including Mr. Europe, Mr. International and Mr. World titles. Discounting a one-shot bid for the Mr. Olympia award in 1980, to all intents and purposes Schwarzenegger stopped competing in 1975 and now considers himself retired.

Just out of curiosity, I ask Schwarzenegger how one goes about becoming a world-champion athlete. He tells me. "To create a world-champion physique, or a world champion anything, takes a world-champion mind. A world-champion mind can see a world-champion physique *before the fact*, and if you can see it, you can do it.

"I've done a lot of seminars on this, you know, Schwarzenegger adds. "I've been hired by corporations to psych up businessmen, to show them how to gain this confidence and positive thinking. For me, this is simple; first you have to

have victory in your mind, and then it's just a matter of time and following through. But you must first visualize it before you do it. The mind is much more important than the body in getting to this stage. In fact, the body is just a machine that follows the mind through."

Well. How long, then, has Schwarzenegger been involved with CONAN? "I've been directly involved with CONAN for the last two years," he replies. "Working out for it, accommodating my schedule for it and—more and more—wanting it. Now this training I started two years ago was interrupted, because of problems getting the project underway. But then I went back into training about a year ago."

"I've done my usual weight training of an hour a day for CONAN and included running and a lot of stretching exercises. Then, of course, I had to undergo certain specialized training just for the film itself. This included a lot of sword training. Initially, I was working with swords with a man named Paul Cloud, who'd worked on 1941. Then I trained under Yamazaki, who specializes in sword training. So in that respect I

earned a little from Cloud and the majority from Yamazaki."

Schwarzenegger still has on his camouflage makeup. A black wedge of paint runs across his face, making the whites of his eyes stand out crazily. I tell him he looks like a demented raccoon. He laughs. Then I ask him for some observations on Milius.

"John's involvement with this film is the best possible thing for it," he states emphatically. "No one else I can think of could as properly interpret CONAN as him."

"And Milius is the only one who would hire me and Gerry and Sandahl for it," Schwarzenegger continues. "Only a guy like John would have the guts to go for that cast. The majority of directors would have only looked at those actors who were bankable. Someone else, for instance, might have picked Charles Bronson and then just rewritten the script, picking up Conan from the time he was 40. I think that picking us took an enormous amount of courage on John's part."

"It's worked out too. John knows that, after he's practiced with us and trained with us and talked with us, when we finally get to the set he doesn't really have to do that much with us anymore. This is exactly what's happened. We know our lines, and have done our horseback and sword training. He doesn't have to worry about our being prepared for the part."

What about the accidents? "The problem isn't getting hurt, but that the production is slowed down by your getting hurt," Schwarzenegger points out. "So we're all doing our best to be as careful, and yet as authentic, as we possibly can. My dropping off that hill at the start of filming was a good beginning for me, because it set the tone of the

film. That fall made me realize that what we were doing was dangerous, and that there was a possibility of an accident happening every day. I think we all respect the dangers much more now."

Then what, I conclude, does Schwarzenegger think of the character himself? "I love playing Conan," he replies. "And I love being dirty and grubby for the part. Psychologically, it's had a good impact. One of the qualities of movie acting is that it allows you to play. And it's fun to swing a sword and see someone die in a gush of blood. This is like being a kid and playing Cowboys and Indians all over again."

Thursday, Jan. 29

The bar at the Apartamentos Villa Magna is, by necessity, the unacknowledged social nexus for the CONAN cast and crew. Since many of the company have now been here for months (some arriving as far back as September, 1980), most of these people have exhausted the usual tourist diversions and stay close to familiar ground. The rooms here, after all, are basically a place in which to sleep; why then shouldn't the bar become a communal lounge?

I've spent quite a few nights here myself—eating, drinking and talking. Always talking. As with any film company, cliques have invariably formed, and the same clusters of people nightly group in the same nooks and crannies of the bar. Not surprisingly, most of these cliques can be categorized by nationality: British with British, Italians with Italians, and so on. Almost any night you can find

Milius at the head of a clan too, usually surrounded by his actors and key personnel, their heads together, their voices low, oblivious to the stares of the Apartamentos' other, non-filmmaking guests.

I pull up to a glass of indifferent Spanish beer and reflect on the day. Locally, of course, the hot news is that the Spanish president resigned this evening. I was sitting in my apartment going over material when he abruptly came on television and gave his resignation speech. An hour later I went down to the hotel lobby to find soldiers, automatic weapons slung around their necks, lounging in the corridors. The atmosphere in the city since has been subtly tense. For the next few days I see so many armed, uniformed men on the streets that the sight becomes commonplace.

This morning, however, was spent in more favorable conditions. Today most of the crew moved to a location outside Segovia, to begin picking up shots on the set of the Cimmerian village. Since Arnold, Sandahl and Gerry aren't needed for this particular sequence, they've stayed behind in Madrid and have agreed to spend a day on the Orgy Chamber set modeling costumes for some publicity stunts. As I've been told I'm to be driven to Segovia tomorrow for an interview with Milius, I tag along with the three actors back to the Nave'.

The Nave' is altogether different today, empty of all but costume and effects personnel. And I was right; walking onto the mostly unlit Orgy Chamber is like strolling into an upright freezer. At one point when Sandahl is modeling a brief pit-fighter costume (a pit-fighter is someone who fights in a shallow grave and whose victory consists of being able to crawl alive from it; this is an occupation both Valeria and Conan undertake early in the film), the cold is so extreme that her thighs turn blue and must be covered with makeup.

I stand with the small group of wardrobe people and rubberneck the photo session, admiring the various outfits as Lopez, Bergman and Schwarzenegger return time and again from their trailers wearing yet another costume.

One such outfit, which Arnold wears on horseback in the film, is mainly composed of heavy furs and shimmering chain mail. I later learn that these links are a stainless steel weave used by London slaughterhouse employees, so designed that any splashing blood will simply strike the mail and roll off it, protecting the workers' clothes beneath. Apparently, John Bloomfield gathered yards of this material in England and has simply cut it to size. Butcher's garb for CONAN—somehow it seems thoroughly appropriate.

During a lull in the shoot I decide to interview Gerry Lopez.

Arnold, Sandahl and Gerry spend the day on the orgy set modeling costumes. During a lull, I decide to interview Gerry Lopez, who is lounging in Thulsa Doom's chambers.





Left: Sandahl Bergman as Valeria models her costume as a pit fighter. Right: Arnold Schwarzenegger as Conan models a costume of furs and shimmering chain mail he wears on horseback in the film. The metal links are regularly used for the garb of London slaughterhouse employees, an appropriate touch for this bloody saga.

Lopez is laid back on a mass of cushions in Thulsa's private chamber, whiling away the time by reading a novel called, appropriately enough, *Vallhalla*. I've heard he's in a bad mood today, but beyond some initial crabbiness I don't catch any of it.

Deeply tanned, darkly handsome and an old surfing friend of Milius, Lopez was born in Honolulu in 1948. In the world of competitive surfing Lopez is a heavyweight, a well-known champion who has appeared on television as a sports commentator and has even, in Milius' surfing film *BIG WEDNESDAY*, played himself in a movie. But today he doesn't want to talk about contests.

"Those are insignificant," Lopez says. "It's the big waves and the good waves that stand out in my mind, more than any competition." Big waves are something Lopez knows quite intimately; he recently built a home at Hawaii's Banzai Pipeline, where the waves (and coral reefs just under the water) are among the hairiest in the islands.

Lopez has been in Spain since December 5th, 1980, but his association with Milius reaches further back. "John and I have been friends since *BIG WEDNESDAY*," Lopez states, "and when he rewrote the *CONAN* script I'm pretty sure he created the part of Subotai with me

in mind. You see, Subotai's a character I identified with, fantasized about and have actually *been* since I was a child.

"That takes some explaining, I guess," he continues. "John and I have one thing strongly in common. We both grew up in fantasy worlds, of war and warriors, and we've both managed to carry those things through to adulthood. Now, Subotai has a basis in historical fact. He happened to be Ghenghis Khan's greatest general during the conquest of the Middle East and Europe. Subotai was also a brilliant strategist. For instance, he went across Europe with 20,000 men in what he called a 'Reconnaissance in Force,' and that feat has never been equaled. And he fought over 60 campaigns with very little loss of men. So John and I see *CONAN*'s Subotai as a forerunner of the great Subotai of Ghenghis Khan's time."

I mention that Subotai is also the name of the Toshiro Mifune character in Kurosawa's *SEVEN SAMURAI*. "That's right," Lopez says. "I don't know how much of that particular Subotai spilled over into John's own creation, if at all. Besides, Kurosawa's Subotai was mostly a combination of what Mifune is as an actor, anyway."

Back out at the shoot Schwarzenegger has just finished another series of poses. He walks over and

notices me staring at the sword he's holding. It's a beautiful thing, hand-crafted and gleaming. Arnold notices the look on my face and asks, "Would you like to hold it?" I nod. He puts the sword into my hands. This is the Cobb-designed weapon Schwarzenegger takes from the Thing in the crypt. It weighs about 15 pounds; its cold steel blade is sharp to the touch. It's also superbly crafted; I find I can balance it on one outstretched finger.

Arnold gets his sword back. I wander off again. Today the Orgy Chamber is being put back together, as some additional set-ups are going to be needed here later in the week. It's a changed environment. The results of yesterday's carnage have been cleaned away and the central snake-column has been re-erected, propped up by wooden supports. A surreal detail: three Spanish women are mopping up the great pools of studio blood which cover the floor as calmly as if they were tidying their own kitchens.

During the remainder of the afternoon, I manage to get my picture taken with Schwarzenegger and Bergman. I then find that I'm to ride back with Sandahl and Gerry to the Apartamentos, so I ask if she'd like to do an interview on the way home. Sandahl doesn't mind at all.

Besides her marvelously lithe dancer's body, Bergman's most striking characteristic are her deep, lunar-like eyes. Yet like Valerie Quenessen, Bergman is much more than mere meat. Behind her striking facade I sense admirable reserves of inner strength. The truth is I've fallen a little in love with Sandahl over the last few days.

Bergman was born in Kansas in 1951. Her career as a dancer spans many years, many heartbreaks and both coasts, from Hollywood and bit-parts on *THE BILL COSBY SHOW* and *LAUGH-IN* to starring roles on Broadway in the likes of *A CHORUS LINE*. More recently she was prominently featured on a two-hour television special called *SIXTY YEARS OF SEDUCTION*, an examination of sex objects in the cinema, and also appeared as an awards presenter on a syndicated broadcast of the latest Academy of Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy Films awards show.

Yet it was a film by Bob Fosse—*ALL THAT JAZZ*—which brought Bergman into the *CONAN* circle. "John had a basic picture in his mind of what he thought Valeria should look like," Bergman says, shifting her long legs in the cramped back seat of the taxi. "Then he saw me in *ALL THAT JAZZ* and invited me to a reading for the part of Valeria. I think he

was impressed with how strong I look holding a sword, that I really could cut somebody down if I had to. He wanted a physical person, because of the essence of what Valeria has to do in CONAN.

"When I picked up the script," Bergman continues, "I said to myself, 'This is something I can do.' And I was very impressed with that script." I tell her I've read a third draft of the Milius scenario myself and was surprised at its high quality. "Oh yes," she agrees. "It's a great piece of work. Very theatrical, almost like stage drama. And I relate to the character of Valeria very much, because my own personal life has been a struggle. Like Valeria, out of all this turmoil magic has happened.

"The part is really every actress' dream," she adds. "I'm this enormously fascinating woman, and I fall deeply in love, and I even get to come back from the dead! It's a huge challenge to me, but then I never do anything little."

I ask Bergman about the film's violence. "I love it," she says. "All this hacking and stabbing is great fun. It's also given us a chance to learn a marvelous variety of martial arts." Up in the front seat, Gerry Lopez, who's been silent until now, adds his own pungent commentary on the picture's physicality. "A CONAN without blood and

guts," he says, "would be like a beach without sand."

Later, back in the bar, the general conversation seems to have turned to what the film company has missed in the States since they've been here in Spain. Sipping my beer, I remember John Lennon. And since I've left America, I've missed a Presidential inauguration and the return of the hostages from Iran.

John Bloomfield drops onto the stool next to mine. He tells me a humorous anecdote: because of the weight of the costumes and the size of the men they're fitting (like Schwarzenegger), the costume department has had to make special wooden hangers shaped like thick rectangular bars simply to be able to hang up the outfits. For that tidbit I buy Bloomfield a drink.

Friday, Jan. 30

Today I'm finally going out of doors to watch some exteriors being shot. Although the interior work has been highly entertaining, I'm looking forward to the clean air in the mountains beyond Segovia, where a large Cimmerian village has been built.

We leave early, in yet another cab, for the long journey to the location. The village itself is situated in a forest 21 kilometers south of Segovia near the skiing resort of Valsain. That translates into a two-hour drive. On the way we pass by a variety of historical sites, including a medieval-looking stone tower looming on a hill just off the road. I ask the driver what it is. He laughs and replies that it is a set, a remnant from an old Errol Flynn swash-buckler shot here back in the '50s.

We also pass by a valley in which a crucial, bloody battle was fought during the Spanish Civil War. And later, I'm alerted to a towering, 150-meter-high obelisk far off in the mountains. A gigantic cross caps its apex. This is Franco's resting place: his monument and tomb.

The Cimmerian set is tucked away within a highly photogenic glade. In order to reach it, we have to pass by two CONAN-controlled checkpoints miles down the road. At both of these men with walkie-talkies ask our business and identity before clearing us through. When we finally reach the sites, I can see why.

We pull off a frozen dirt road in a cluster of caravans and sound trucks. The set is up a small path. After walking about 50 yards and turning a corner I suddenly come upon two dozen men on horseback wearing furs and brandishing weapons; their faces are painted red and white. These are the film's Vanir Raiders, and they're slowly clapping down the improvised path into the village itself. I follow them into pre-history.

The Cimmerian village is large and more than impressive. It looks *authentic*. About a dozen huts, shaped like inverted bowls and fabricated out of branches and lashed saplings, are scattered about a snow-dusted meadow. A number of rough wooden livestock pens have been erected around some of these huts; within them, pigs and goats snuffle at the ground. A number of bonfires have also been built. I later learn that the majority of these are fed by bottled-gas lines concealed beneath the snow. Later in the day, the fires will be turned up to simulate the burning of the village.

I remember Horsman's comments about the company's diffi-

culties with snow back on my first day in Madrid. So I squat down to examine one of the "flakes" beneath my feet. It's not snow at all. This is a marble shaving in my palm, and I later learn that about a million *pesetas* (or \$80,000) worth of these flakes have been sprayed throughout the village. Problem evaluated and overcome.

Deciding to step inside one of the huts, I walk towards the nearest. Next to its "door" (nothing more than a round hole) is a lashed rack made of wood, on which is the gutted carcass of a wild pig. It's a nice touch; the film company itself shot the animal in these woods and, later, will eat it. Inside the hut the sense of reality is increased; this interior is bristling with freshly cut young trees.

I step outside. Smoke from the fires is wafting up through the trees; the light is shining through the branches and the smoke in hard bars of light. It's a beautiful sight. I feel, once again, that I've stepped into an illustration.

Milius is shooting a clutch of action sequences today. Under the leadership of Thulsa Doom, the Vanir Raiders sweep into the young Conan's village, kill all its adult inhabitants (including Conan's mother and father) and then lead the surviving children off to be sold as slaves. I witness a number of Terry Leonard-staged gags, as various stuntpeople are impaled by spears, thunder through huts and hack at running, screaming women. It's a fun morning.

During this time I also greet some old acquaintances and meet some new ones. Ben (Rexor) Davidson, he of the deep voice and gentle demeanor, bids me good morning. Bill Smith, in costume and full beard, says hello. I'm introduced to J.L. Santiago Montoya, the young Spanish actor who portrays Conan as a boy. A few minutes later someone brings Nadiuska, the actress portraying Conan's mother, over to chat. She's had an interesting past. A Polish stage actress, Nadiuska relocated in Spain in the 1970's without speaking a word of the language. Yet within a few years she was not only fluent in Spanish but one of the highest box office draws in the country.

James Earl Jones walks by in the leather armor he wears throughout this part of the film. However, he's not wearing Thulsa Doom's long, flowing wig, which reaches nearly to his knees. Then Nick Alder stops for a moment. He informs me that he's just given Milius a fresh idea for Smith's death scene. According to the script, the Master was to be wounded by arrows before a pack of dogs finally drags him to his death. Alder has suggested that the arrows be substituted with a war-axe, which a Raider will bury, on camera, deep into Smith's back. Milius was delighted by the suggestion; the

I feel I've stepped
into an illustration.
The Cimmerian
village is simply a
beautiful sight.
James Earl Jones
walks by in his
armor, sans wig.





Above: Thusla Doom's Vanir Raiders, led by Rexor (left), played by former Oakland Raider Ben Davidson, and Thorgren (right), played by Scandinavian weightlifter and karate expert Sven Ole Thorsen. Inset Top: The Vanir Raiders sweep in on horseback to attack the Cimmerian Village. Bottom: Conan's mother (Nadiuska) defends her son (J. L. Santiago Montoya).



new shot will be staged tomorrow.

I watch a horse and rider attempt to crash through the back of a Cimmerian hut. This gag requires a number of takes. On the first try the horse slams right into the wall—but the wall holds firm. On the next shot, the horse decides once was enough and shies away from the hut at the last possible instant. The third time's the charm, however; a new horse charges straight through the wall without a hitch.

It's almost lunch time. I'm admiring the staggering beauty of this location, listening to the sound of rushing streams pouring off into the woods, when Horsman finds me. It is, it appears, finally time for the Milius interview. We take a bottle of wine and our plates of food from the lunch tent (which, along with equipment trucks and caravans, has been transported here from Madrid) to Milius' own trailer. For the next hour-and-a-half I speak with CONAN's writer, director and mainspring.

John Milius was seemingly born to bring Conan to the screen. Of all the current American directors, he has most consistently created the exact sort of tightly-controlled, romanticized adventures which originally brought American films to international prominence. Milius once said he came to movies to

make low-budget westerns; beneath that rather arch statement lies a core of truth.

The American western became *the* genre of a national consciousness, a noble arena of fantasy where personal toughness and personal codes (of honor, courage and loyalty) intermingled to produce a body of undeniably classic cinema. And all of Milius' films, whether contemporary or historical, have reflected that classicism. The capable, honorable loner occurs in *DIRTY HARRY* and *MAGNUM FORCE* (both of which Milius scripted) in the persona of Clint Eastwood. The rites of passage from boy-to-manhood surfaced in *BIG WEDNESDAY*, and *THE WIND AND THE LION* is Milius' most overt working of the "cowboys and Indians" motif. In that entry, Sean Connery plays a noble and complex "primitive" who challenges, and nearly succeeds in overcoming, the combined might of Teddy Roosevelt and the U.S. Marines. Is it any wonder that John Milius' favorite director is John Ford?

More importantly, Milius' films are *fun*. Even fandom appreciates him. As early as 1976, in a bizarrely prescient moment, issue number four of a fanzine titled *Robert E. Howard: Lone Star Fictioneer* was

dedicated to "Mr. John Milius—Master Storyteller, Legend Maker. Destined to create on film what Kipling, Mundy and Howard put forth in prose." Storytelling is one of Milius' strongest talents; at times I'm tempted to think of him as the village tale-spinner, weaving his stories through a projector's xenon bulb rather than telling them around the campfire.

Born on April 11, 1944, John Milius is an ardent and well-informed military historian. As a youth Milius enjoyed reading Melville, Faulkner, Hemingway and, especially, Jack Kerouac; besides Ford, other directors whose work he's admired include Fuller, Hawks, Kurosawa and Ingmar Bergman.

Milius originally entered filmmaking through the back door; he wanted to be a television writer. However, after enrolling at USC to learn this process, Milius fell in with the so-called USC Mafia, comprised of Lucas, Coppola and Spielberg (although Spielberg is actually a graduate of the University of Arizona). He still maintains friendships with these men (in fact, Milius once wrote a screenplay at college titled simply *GLUT*, concerning the exploits of Don Glut, author of innumerable genre books and the novelization of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*). Milius

also goes so far as to call Coppola (who co-wrote and directed Milius' screenplay of APOCALYPSE NOW) a "brother" from whom he learned to direct actors.

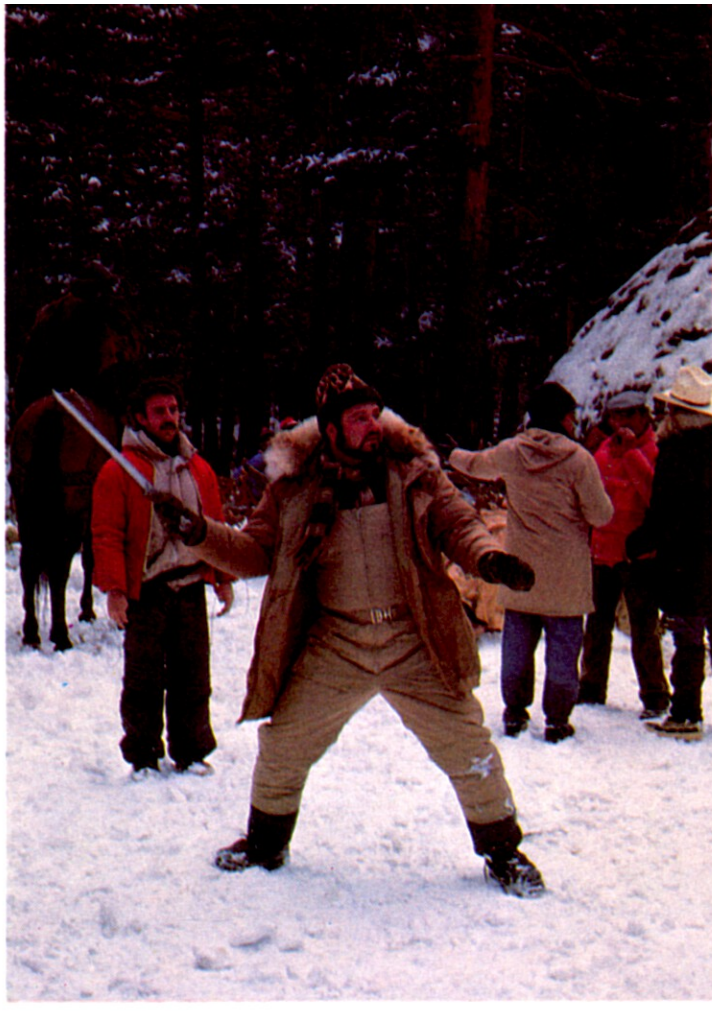
After free-lancing a number of successful film scripts, Milius landed at AIP where he wrote and directed DILLINGER—and he's never looked back. Except for writing the screenplay for the Dan Curtis-directed MELVIN PURVIS: G-MAN (an experience he does not favorably recall), Milius never did write for television.

Milius is a director who was himself once called a "gifted barbarian" by the *Village Voice*, a man pigeonholed by the press as arrogant, crude and obnoxious. But during my stay, that persona never makes an appearance. The first-hand Milius I observe is quiet, hard-working and amusing. Today during our lunch, he's courteous and erudite. So while answering the obligatory questions regarding his past, I decide that John Milius is a rather shy, private, talented man with strongly held views, a man who quite cannily created an arresting self-image for the press to feed upon.

Then again, I reflect, maybe not; Milius is so disarmingly straightforward during our talk that it's not difficult to see how other journalists with a hatchet to hurl or reputation to make could twist his rather childlike honesty into tub-thumping anti-Fascist tracts. I finally decide that Milius is essentially no different than someone who has seen STAR WARS 27 times. At bottom, they're both fans. And who should try, or even want, to remove fans from their fanaticisms?

After talking about APOCALYPSE NOW ("a fabulous film, probably my third favorite film in the world") the topic turns to CONAN. What does Milius think about Robert E. Howard, without whom we both wouldn't be sitting here? "A pulp writer," Milius replies, "but a very interesting pulp writer. Howard is not a writer that I would say was going to be influential on my work for the rest of my life—he's not Melville or Conrad—but he had some great images and visions. I enjoyed his knowledge of history, too. Howard drew from almost every imaginable culture. Most importantly, Howard and I share the same view of civilization. Which is, to put it mildly, a highly skeptical one."

I mention that Milius has obviously done his CONAN homework, too; the script is sprinkled with references to well-known Howard stories. "Oh, you mean the bits from things like 'Queen of the Black Coast' and 'The Frost Giant's Daughter?'" he asks. "Sure—I took everything that was useful from the stories, tried to constantly use as much of Howard's work as possible, tried to work little



Director John Milius runs through desired swordplay action on the set of the Cimmerian Village for the sequence involving the charge of the Vanir Raiders.

pieces of those stories into the screenplay. But one of the things about CONAN is that I'm never going to please everybody. There are going to be Conan fanatics who'll say, 'Well, Milius took a part of this story and a part of that story. But the overall film's an original. Why didn't he adapt this movie from a story?'"

Why indeed? Why an origin story, as the scenario ultimately became? "Because the idea in this movie was to create a character from the time he was a little boy until he's a complete man, a finished human being. To create a complex and definitive Conan, if you will. At the end of the film Conan is, to me, a very interesting character. In some ways the questions which are put to him are even more difficult than the dilemmas themselves.

"You see, in the best work I've done to my own satisfaction, I have always created characters that had more questions to ask in the end than they did in the beginning. For instance, the Martin Sheen character in APOCALYPSE NOW is certainly more interesting when he goes back down that river than when he went up it."

I tell Milius that mentioning Howard has reminded me of other hands that have shaped Conan over the years: for instance, Marvel Comics' Roy Thomas (who script-

ed many of the Cimmerian's four-color adventures) and, of course, Frank Frazetta. What about their contributions to the first Conan film? "Roy Thomas has been very helpful to us," Milius says. "Whenever I'd write part of the script, Roy would go over it to see if he could find any discrepancies in the Howard legend. It wasn't that big of a deal, though. Roy would say, 'If you want to change this, it would be more accurate.' So he's been tremendously helpful.

"As for Frazetta, he's certainly been a terrific inspiration to all of us. He must never be slighted in any way. He's the high priest of Conan, and he has been more important to me than the Conan books were. In fact, we'd like to have Frazetta do a one-sheet for us when it's time to do that. Or have Ron Cobb do it. Because even though we never forgot Frazetta, Ron's always been the man on CONAN. The look on this picture is most definitely his. And I feel very responsible for bringing Ron into the movie industry. I guess I should get one credit there."

When I mention that it seems that most directors don't publicly give credit on a film to their co-workers, Milius says, "Look, CONAN is a group effort. Just look at what Arnold's doing for Christ's sake. Or Nick Allder."

Schwarzenegger, I inform Milius,

has much the same attitude. During our interview, the actor told me that he only tried to do what Milius told him. "Well," the director says, smiling, "to quote Churchill, 'It is they who have the heart of the lion. I merely furnish the roar.'"

What about the special effects of CONAN? "To me, the most fantastic movie I've seen as far as fantasy and a surreal feeling are concerned was APOCALYPSE NOW, which has no special effects. You see," Milius explains, "although we have a number of effects techniques throughout the film—such as James Earl Jones turning into a snake and a character called the Wolf Woman—it's really the storytelling that matters. Ultimately it doesn't matter how clever you are technically, or who can make a better miniature. All that matters is the storyline. Besides, when it comes to special effects I just go where I'm pointed."

One final point—how does Milius feel about the fantasy elements which have always been a part of Howard's creations? "I've included the supernatural in the script because it's integral to the Conan myth," Milius replies, "but I really don't care about it. Everybody these days wants to dwell on psychic powers, they want to dwell on the supernatural. You know why? Because they want these things and can't have them.

"Take a magic sword, for instance. The idea of a magic sword is boring to me. Therefore, the protagonist who uses it is boring. If he has a magic sword he'll always win with, then what's the point? It's like Superman. Superman to me is the most boring of all characters, because you can't shoot him. You can only shoot him with a kryptonite bullet, and only one villain has the kryptonite bullet. There's no depth there.

"Besides, in Howard the fantasy element is always the solution to a problem, a way to quickly get out of the story. 'Worms of the Earth,' that sort of thing. At the end of that story Howard can't find enough evil things to do to his villains so all of a sudden a tower falls on them, because these creatures come up from underground to finish them off. That's a plot device I don't like."

Although Milius must eventually go back to the set after lunch, the interview is far from over. After the last shot of the day he asks me to ride with him to his hotel so we can continue our talk. We do so, first in the car itself and, later in the lobby of the *parador* (a state-controlled hotel), where Milius and crew are staying until they wrap shooting on the Cimmerian set. The lobby is a large, open room, with a heart-stopping view of Segovia and its 2,000-year-old Roman aqueduct spread out in the valley below. We talk about many things, including the fact that Milius has invented a

complete biographical history for each of the major fictional characters in the film. He's also given each actor the details of these histories in order to help them in the further development of these roles.

Take Valeria, for instance. In certain respects, her life is parallel to Conan. Milius is positive that her mother was French and her father a Viking. During a raid she is captured by Conan as a child, and forced into slavery. Stronger than other women and also more attractive, she is at first a valued young virgin. As she grows older, she becomes a sort of sexual prize given to various noblemen who attend pit-fights, the ferocious one-on-one combats which leaves only one opponent able to crawl alive from their fighting area, a shallow grave. As Valeria becomes still older and stronger, she finds herself wanting to become a pit-fighter. At first, she is an attendant and dresser to these fighters, and then eventually trained in the various aspects of the contest itself.

Over the years, Valeria becomes a great pit-fighter. In Milius' own variant to Howard's Hyborean Age, when one becomes a great pit-fighter they are retired from the sport. If one has become very proficient at this sort of combat, they are then taught various martial arts and philosophies, finally becoming a living oracle on battle and

strengths. As Conan is depicted in a short scene in the film, these exalted pit-fighters become valuable retainers of generals and other military strategists who seek their hard-won advice on tactics and strategies.

It's night by the time we're finished. Only then do I realize that Milius has not only provided the longest single interview on the film, but also one of the most comprehensive.

I click off the cassette recorder. Surprisingly, once the tape is off, Milius confesses that interviews make him nervous. I assure him that it doesn't show. On my journey back to Madrid I decide that Milius' public image is, at best, incomplete.

The late-night ride to the Apartamentos is also, symbolically, the end of my CONAN journey, though there are still a number of incidents to fill my time before I depart Madrid on February 1st. For instance, under the cerulean skies hovering over the Cimmerian village, as dusk creeps through the woods, I watch a special effects sequence involving the decapitation of Conan's mother.

After a number of takes involving Nadiuska and James Earl Jones (swinging his sword at the wooden-framed, plexi-glass shield which, out of camera range, protects the actress' face), Carlode Marchis' cable-controlled head is brought out. Several assistants have gathered wheelbarrows full of what little real snow still surrounds the village and have dumped it in a mound in front of the camera. Nadiuska's false head is then laid on top of this mound, the cables hidden under the snow. Now Milius, carrying what looks like an old-fashioned fire extinguisher, pumps the cannister with one hand while spraying blood upon the head and snow with

another. He's smiling again.

The head gets to people, even these jaded moviemakers. Most of the onlookers grimace, crack nervous jokes or simply mutter "Gross!" A few actually leave as Milius runs through a half-dozen takes of the head's mouth opening or eyes rolling or tongue lolling in its death spasms; each successive take is a different combination of these movements. CONAN still has a long shoot to go before it reaches the censors at the MPAA (the location shooting will wrap in May). How many of these gore effects, I wonder, does Milius hope to retain? Remembering Gerry Lopez' comment about beaches without sand, I hope they all stay in.

The shadows are now thickly piled under the trees. Milius sounds the last "Cut!" of the day and the crew begins to collect its equipment. The following evening I will have a relaxed, final interview with Ron Cobb. And there's still an impromptu farewell party at the bar—and a long return to Paris by the Puerta del Sol—before I'll physically break with the production company.

But spiritually at least, the journal ends here, high on a Spanish peak in the twilight settling upon Conan's boyhood home. It's been a pleasant, well-coordinated and illuminating visit. Simply by being here I now comprehend filmmaking's hidden hook; it's a narcotic. Who could go back to a regular job after the barely controlled insanity of making movies? And for a few days I've been a part of this insanity, part of a highly talented group of professionals trying their damndest to translate the purest type of literary escapism to the screen. It seems only fitting then, that my last day on the CONAN set should be where the film proper begins.

Most of the crew has left. I wander through the dark Cimmerian village, run a hand along one of the huts. At a distance I suddenly hear the sound of a taxi's horn. High in the trees, as if pre-arranged by Nick Alder, an owl answers back. It's a long way from Cross Plains, Texas (where Howard wrote and died) to this multi-million dollar externalization of his imagination. What, I wonder, would he think about it?

The horn sounds again. My cab is here, calling me home. I turn away from the Hyborean Age and walk towards a rattling combustion engine—the sound of civilization. The owl calls one last time. Somewhere, I'd like to think, in a very particular Valhalla teeming with lusty, uncomplicated heroes, Robert E. Howard is looking down on all this. And smiling. □

CONAN UPDATE

Of course, the CONAN story didn't end with my leaving the company in early February. Since that time, the political climate in Spain worsened; right-wing sympathizers held more than 200 customers hostage in a Barcelona bank, for instance, and the country's fragile democracy seemed that much closer to splintering.

Yet the film unit itself was unaffected by the flux. CONAN continued to shoot at various Madrid locations until mid-March. These sequences included Conan's and Subotai's battle with the giant serpent, an elaborate, complicated scene with Nick Alder himself controlling his on-floor hydraulic snake. For an effect which traditionally poses a monumental headache, shooting on the sequence was remarkably smooth and trouble-free, requiring only three days to complete.

After filming wrapped in Madrid, CONAN moved south to the coastal town of Almeria. Under conditions more primitive than those encountered in the Spanish capital—in the hotel in which they found themselves, for example, telephones were not even available to the majority of the company—many of the film's more spectacular scenes were shot. These included key sequences revolving around Thulsa Doom's stronghold, the Mountain of Power (for which James Earl Jones again joined the company) and the climactic Battle of the Mounds, where Conan's lifelong quest for revenge takes a major, crucial turning.

Shooting wrapped in mid-May. Postproduction chores, including dubbing and the composition of the film's score by Basil Poloudoris (a fellow USC graduate, Poloudoris also wrote the score for THE BLUE LAGOON and Milius' BIG WEDNESDAY), will occupy Milius throughout the summer and fall in Los Angeles. Although the film is still officially slated to be released this Christmas, there is a strong possibility that CONAN will finally stride into American theaters in February, 1982.

—Paul M. Sammon

Still photographer Bob Penn takes a shot of me on the Orgy Chamber set. "Look worried," he tells me. It's not hard. That sword is on, just in case.





WOLFEN

**They dreamed of it as the
"thinking man's horror film."
But to the producers, it's been
more like a filmmaker's nightmare.**

By Stephen Rebello

Their scents revealed they were partners and the way their voices sounded as they talked to one another said that they had worked together a long time... The scents became sharp with the smell of fear as the two humans groped through the darkness. It made digestive juices flow and hearts beat faster with lust for the hunt.

—*The Wolfen* by Whitley Streiber

When producers Rupert Hitzig and Alan King snapped up the rights to Whitley Streiber's shaggy wolf story back in 1978, they knew it would be difficult to translate the book's unusual Wolfen point-of-view to the screen.

In fact, when production on Orion Picture's WOLFEN began back in October, 1979 [10:3:21], the only thing that then-director Michael Wadleigh was certain of was that nothing about the so-called "alien-vision" was certain.

But it's doubtful that Hitzig, King or Wadleigh could have possibly conceived that their self-proclaimed "thinking man's horror film" would still be mired in an expensive eleventh-

hour production crunch just weeks before the scheduled release. Perhaps the most terrifying aspect of WOLFEN—at least to its makers—is that after 20 months, \$15 million, four screenwriters, two directors and several special effects houses, crucial effects sequences remained incomplete. Just six weeks prior to its July 24 opening, a topnotch effects crew—headed by STAR WARS alumnus Robbie Blalack—was still working frantically to complete WOLFEN's opticals on time.

"We knew from the outset that filming the Wolfen point-of-view, or 'alien-vision' as we call it, was going to be one elusive son of a gun," said Rupert Hitzig during a break from a musical scoring session. "Nobody really went in with a master plan as to how to shoot the thing in a way that would give us complete manipulative editing and color control. Let's just say that the whole thing has been at a great cost to my sanity, my family life and certainly my pocketbook."

In preproduction, WOLFEN's producers authorized a tidy \$80,000 in seed money to effects houses on both coasts for generating footage that would approximate how the extraordinarily intelligent and sen-

sorily-tuned Wolfen perceived the world.

"When we started, we had a technical consultant who we assumed knew what he was talking about," Hitzig said. "We were assured that they had this phenomenal new computer print out device with the capacity to generate 235 different shades of grey. Well, I found that astronomical amounts of money for start-up and programming were being asked for without anyone being willing to prove that it actually could be done! We wanted to do things that had never been done before on straight optical printers, but the footage looked all grey and colors fell off into nothingness. So we shut it down, looked around and went with Blalack's company, Praxis."

Praxis is among the new crop of small, sophisticated special effects houses that have sprung up in recent years. Blalack, who set up the shop after splitting with former partner Jamie Shourt, first met with Wadleigh and Hitzig in August, 1980, and was given ten weeks to show the producers what they could do.

"I showed them ten years of work," Blalack said, "right through to STAR WARS. At that point, Michael

and Rupert were fairly specific about what they were after, but they were extraordinarily open to our input."

Praxis was originally hired for three months of work, but due to several changes in concept and personnel—most important the replacement of Wadleigh with John Hancock (who was himself replaced on JAWS II) late in 1980—they worked on WOLFEN for fully nine months. "They have tremendous fiscal responsibility and concern, and they're creative," said Hitzig of Blalack and his crew. "Frankly, it was a welcome breath of fresh air."

The first "alien-vision" technique that Praxis explored was "smell-o-vision," a Michael Wadleigh brain-child that centered on the Wolfen's ability to sniff out their prey. "Since we obviously couldn't hand out sniff cards to audiences, we tried to convey the idea that the Wolfen could sniff—translation: *see*—images of dozens of people who had recently passed through a particular setting," explained Praxis' optical supervisor Beth Block. "The Wolfen would sift through these images and seize on the person they're tracking. The backgrounds would always be visible *through* and *behind* the rapidly moving images of extraneous people. When the Wolfen locate *the* person, the image would lock in and become intensely focused."

The "smell-o-vision" effects involved ghost-printing black and white figures over a color background. Though promising, the technique proved a backbreaker, since shots lasting only five to ten seconds were so image-dense that they required the equivalent of five *minutes* of film. "'Smell-o-vision' was a good idea, but the footage never really proved clear enough from an audience's standpoint," Beth Block explained. "It just looked flashy." When Michael Wadleigh exited WOLFEN "for political reasons" (the exact reasons are still unclear), "smell-o-vision" breathed its last.

Praxis next began work on a suitable means of achieving the Wolfen's night vision, which is used to hunt their human prey. After rejecting



footage simply shot night-for-night, Blalack began experimenting with the use of false color and color substitution. The results, according to those who saw the early tests, were judged "phenomenal," but it was decided that it looked *too* phenomenal for the film's purposes.

"To this day, Robbie probably disagrees with the choices that have been made," Hitzig explained. "I know he would just as soon have had a strawberry-pink sky and shimmering iridescent lights—gorgeous stuff—but it certainly placed the Wolfen at a distance from the poor mortal viewing the film. Blalack wanted to place the Wolfen's sensory capacities in a world of utopian color. Orion Pictures and I just felt the footage was too radical a departure from normal vision. It was particularly jarring in the number of cuts we have that shift from objective camera to 'alienvision.' We held that the juxtaposition would distance the audience's subconscious identification with the Wolfen, and in turn, with the picture itself. Obviously, that was something we did not want to do."

The rejection of the color replacement technique was a huge disappointment for Blalack and his crew, who felt they had come up with a truly startling visual scheme. "It was beautiful. It was really something special," said Beth Block. "But did it approximate the way the Wolfen see? Maybe not. So we went with another approach that audiences could relate to, was filmically exciting and that worked within the story context. We realized that though some effects may seem old hat to us, they're not to most movie audiences. And you *don't* do effects to show off for other optical houses."

The final "alienvision" design is still startling: a dark sky, a bright image and a sharp, jagged photographic outline on a figure in a color that signifies whether or not the Wolfen sees a human as prey. Blalack began with the assumption that the Wolfen could sense different emotional states as various colors; anger, fear and aggression would all be visibly different.



Opposite page and above: Detective Dewey Wilson (Albert Finney) and terrorist expert Becky Neff (Diane Verona) are confronted by, and then flee from the Wolfen, a race of highly-intelligent wolves who want to protect their urban stomping grounds. The action is frequently seen and heard through the Wolfen's heightened senses; they can see emotional states the way infrared film can "see" temperatures. To create this unique point-of-view—dubbed "alienvision"—Robbie Blalack spent months creating an assortment of optical effects until producer Rupert Hitzig was fully satisfied. The four "alienvision" opticals shown on this page were generated by modifying portions of the scene (using mattes based on differences in color and/or density), then recombining it with the original footage on the optical printer. From top: 1) Finney and Verona flee from the Wolfen's ghetto lair at dusk, a so-called "15-minute magic hour" when the beasts are especially dangerous. 2) Albert Finney confronts the Wolfen in a New York highrise, a shot cut from the final film. The orange tint symbolizes to the Wolfen Finney's status as a potential ally. 3) A startled Pauline Vandervere (Ann Marie Pahtako) is about to become an early Wolfen victim. 4) Gregory Hines plays a medical examiner who will examine no longer. The jagged white lines may have originally appeared as subtle differences in shading, but have been accentuated by the contrast matte technique.

To properly isolate the desired foreground elements from the rest of the footage—which was shot without consideration to postproduction needs—contrast separations were frequently used, a technique also used in *ALTERED STATES* to add opticals to conventionally photographed footage. Using a wide range of film stocks and filters at various contrast levels, Beth Block was able to separate the flesh tones in a particular shot, alter it to taste, and recombine the footage to good effect. For several sequences, it was necessary to rotoscope the desired areas of the frame, a tedious chore handled by artist Pete Von Sholly.

Optical work was also required to enhance the actual look of the Wolfen. "At one point, Michael and I considered using midgets with masks," Hitzig said, "but that would have undermined the allegorical feel we were after and take the picture into the realm of the grotesque. It's true we were both anxious not to lay any of the Wolfen's attributes to real wolves, a species that's already pretty maligned. But in the end, we decided to go with real wolves, doctoring them to be totally black. I also felt strongly that Robbie and his crew should work on giving the Wolfen a light energy—an aura, almost—that separates them from looking like normal wolves."

Praxis began experimenting on this "aura" in May, 1981, using new footage of the beasts that had been reshot by John Hancock. One option Praxis developed, dubbed the "search-light mode," involved shooting two beams of light against a black velvet drop, and then superimposing that onto the footage. The result, according to many at Praxis, was as nerve-jangling as a lighthouse. Another attempt had animators tinting the eyes of the animals a violent blue. The "ole blue eyes" approach was torpedoed too, as were experiments with pinpoint lasers, which gave the Wolfen a semi-intentional *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED* look. Eventually, Blalack, Hitzig and Hancock agreed on a white, milky glow of filaments around the Wolfen's orbs, accomplished by tedious rotoscoping that was finally completed just five weeks before the film opened nationally.

WOLFEN's makeup effects also went through several major changes during the course of filming, contributing to the film's expense and delay. Makeup artist Carl Fullerton had signed up on the project back in the summer of 1979, having just completed a stint on *ALTERED STATES* assisting Dick Smith. But when Orion Pictures ordered a halt to principal photography in February, 1980, several makeup effects had yet to be filmed and several others had to be rushed to completion.

"Although I was given plenty of time to generate and test the specific effects that were called for, two of the major effects were left until the last day of New York locations, so it was a rush job," Fullerton explained. "I had to ship a lot of effects out to the West Coast and wasn't there to supervise that shooting. Initially the word was that the horror and gore were

going to be soft-peddled, so they left that for the last thing to be shot. Later the approach changed so the shock stuff was in demand again."

Fullerton, who had yet to see a final cut of the film at the time of his interview, had many lengthy meetings with Wadleigh to discuss the specific effects required. "Unlike many directors who never tell you what they're after until they're ready to shoot, Michael would sketch ideas on paper. He wanted to do things that had never been done on camera, and he made that process so much more open."

Early in the film, the Wolfen murder two wealthy New Yorkers, Christopher and Pauline Vandervere (Max Brown and Ann Marie Paktako) in New York City's Battery Park. "Michael didn't want the audience to fully see the creatures or to see that they were actually ripping out their victim's throats," Fullerton said. "He decided just to show blood dribbling from the man's mouth. I wasn't pleased with that. Not only was it boring and a cliché, it isn't medically feasible."

Instead, Fullerton suggested—and Wadleigh adopted—a spurting flow of blood from actor Max Brown's mouth. "Dick Smith gave me some helpful advice," Fullerton said, adding that the effect was somewhat similar to Smith's torrent of pea soup in *THE EXORCIST*. "Smith suggested I attach a denture clip into the actor's mouth, then attach tubing to it. I later found a way to actually direct the blood flow." The tubing came up the back of the neck under Brown's hair, over his cheek and into the corners of his mouth. Latex appliances camouflaged the mechanics. To film blood flowing from Brown's nose, Fullerton had him lie down on a large platform to which a camera had been attached. The platform could tilt up and down like a teeter-totter, but the camera would see no such movement. Open-ended blood capsules were inserted into Brown's nostrils while his head was near the ground; when the platform was tilted upwards, gravity caused the blood to flow realistically.

The script also called for the Wolfen to tear the hand off of Syad (John McCurry), the Vandervere's Haitian bodyguard. When a false arm proved impractical, Fullerton devised a clever, on-camera effect. "We had the actor reach into his jacket with his own hand, grabbing for a gun in a shoulder strap," he said. "The camera point-of-view is a wolf charging at him and the actor aims the gun at the 'wolf.' Meanwhile, the screen pushes into him and knocks his hand out of the frame. While out of view, I clipped an appliance over his arm—a flexible fiberglass stump spewing blood on his face and upper chest. We avoided a cutaway and the man ostensibly loses his hand on camera."

More grisly effects were required for the death of a derelict named Mule, whose throat is ripped out by the Wolfen. It was one of several makeup sequences designed by Fullerton but shot during postproduction in Los Angeles because of his commitments on *EYEWITNESS*

Right: Diane Verona screams in terror as a New York Police Commissioner (Dick O'Neill) is beheaded by the Wolfen, race of super-intelligent wolves that prowl the New York City's ghettos. The sequence, except for the actual decapitation, was shot on location in New York's financial district. The headless body was portrayed by a small man in an oversized suit for some shots, as well as by a full-scale marionette operated by Eoin Spratt. To film the grisly attack, makeup artist Carl Fullerton constructed an incredibly-detailed dummy head on a flexible gelatin neck (below right), rigged with a series of blood tubes. The head was able to move quite realistically, and was operated by manipulating the handle seen extending down from the middle of the fake chest. At left, a grip holds up a blood-soaked tie, used to help match the location photography. The dummy head wasn't designed to decapitate completely, but when director Michael Wadleigh requested just that, Fullerton had to rip open the back of the head, remove most of the supporting structure (opposite page, left) and resupport the head using piano wire and a scored tongue depressor. The work had to be done quickly, since the decapitation had been left for the last day of shooting and could not be delayed. To film a close-up of Dick O'Neill's head on the ground (opposite page, middle and far right) during the same hectic day, Fullerton designed an appliance fitted to O'Neill's jaw and neck to simulate the jagged wound. The actor's head was extended through a section of fake pavement, prepared to match the Wall Street location (note the pop-top at left).



and *FRIDAY THE 13TH—PART II*. Unlike simple wounds, ripping out a throat required an appliance with substantial depth to it. Fullerton conducted extensive tests on himself before developing an appliance built up with fiberglass, epoxy and latex. "I actually remade the neck area," Fullerton said. "The appliance fits under the jawline to simulate the whole neck and upper chest area. It had to allow the performer plenty of facial and body mobility—his only limitation would be really fast movements. The appliance was strapped to the actor's chest and carefully glued to the lower jaw and neck."

"I have to say it was more successful on me," Fullerton added. "I have a stronger jawline than the actor used in the scene."

But the most demanding makeup assignment of all involved the Wolfen's bold decapitation of a New York police commissioner (Dick O'Neill) in the middle of Wall Street. Although most of the sequence had been filmed on location in the financial district, the closeup of the Wolfen attack was to be shot in the studio. Though it's a key sequence, it was left for the last day of shooting.

"Since there was really no other way to do the scene, I built a dummy head," Fullerton said. "But a rigid dummy head would look just terrible if it wasn't animated." To provide the needed movement, Fullerton built a flexible neck out of gelatin and supported the head with an aluminum rod connected to a universal joint. The mouth was able to open and



close, and a simple flick of the wrist on a control handle allowed an operator to move the head realistically in any number of ways.

But problems arose when Fullerton's dummy head met Eoin Sprott's puppet wolf: it was difficult to get the wolf to attack both on target and at the proper speed. After several unsuccessful attempts, the plan was scrapped and Fullerton was forced to devise a solution on the spot, since filming had to wrap that day.

"Originally, Michael did not want a decapitation," Fullerton said, "he just wanted to see the neck being bitten off and pushed out in front of the camera. After doing a shot, Michael decided that he wanted to change it and have a decapitation, but the dummy wasn't built for that. So we

had to do some surgery on it: open up the back of the neck, cut the whole supporting structure out and resupport it using a tongue depressor! The neck was prescored and had piano wires at the base of the skull. We had Eoin Sprott's puppet head lunge at the neck of the dummy. At that point, I whirled the head off!"

In addition to filming the complex decapitation on the last, hectic day, Fullerton also set up and filmed an insert shot of Dick O'Neill poking his head through a section of fake pavement and rolling his eyes. In addition, the bloody death of Christopher Vandevere was also shot in that same day. But other planned effects could not be squeezed in and were executed in postproduction by makeup artist Allen Weisinger: the ripping out of

the vagrant's throat, described above; a close-up of John McCurry's severed hand lying on the ground, the fingers twitching and still clutching the gun, achieved by having an actor stick his hand through a section of fake pavement and adding a latex stump; and a shot of Dick O'Neill's head flying through the air spewing blood from its nose and mouth, achieved with a false head with built-in canisters of stage blood and compressed air that was literally tossed up and down for the camera.

"The terrific thing was working with Michael," Fullerton said. "But I have to admit that the pressure of doing everything at the last minute made it pretty frustrating. I can't wait to see the movie, though, to see what got left in and what got left out."

What would and wouldn't be included in the final cut was still uncertain only weeks before the film's release. Several sneak previews were reportedly greeted with less than enthusiastic response, and the film was said to have undergone editing changes up to the last minute.

"There's only one bottom line, and that is 'Will it work?'" said producer Rupert Hitzig. "I relied on the judgements of many people in the business—experts. Some proved they knew what they were talking about more than others. A horror film with an ecological/allegorical point of view that's as challenging as it is scary? I repeat: 'Will it work?' I don't know. After working this hard and long, I don't feel I know anything anymore." □



HOW TO BUILD A WEREWOLF:

The arm bone's connected to the dowel rod, the cheek bone's connected to the cable release...

By Kyle Counts

With all due apologies to Patrick MacNee, Dee Wallace, Belinda Belaski & Co., it's clear that the main reason people went to *THE HOWLING* this spring was to actually see social delinquent Eddie Quist turn into a fang-bearing werewolf on screen.

THE HOWLING stunned audiences with the current state-of-the-art (or at least until the release of *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*) in monster-making audio-visuals: quivering flesh, bone-crunching facial elongations, razor-sharp fangs and claws that grow on cue, and the final towering creature itself—all realized in a series of cuts that leave the audience gasping and applauding, bewildered as to where the actor leaves off and the fast-change artistry begins.

Although a great deal of attention has been focused on the work of the film's makeup supervisor and associate producer, 21-year-old whiz-kid Rob Bottin (now busy on the makeup effects for John Carpenter's *THE THING*), the task of transforming Bob Picardo into a giant werewolf was not, of course, a one-man project.

While Bottin concentrated his considerable talents on designing the various werewolf stages and executing much of the incredible on-screen transformation (through the use of air bladders and appliances designed by makeup artist Greg Cannom and a series of full-scale mechanical busts

built by Bottin; see also 11:14), a talented crew led by Steve and Jeff Shank was actually responsible for the film's leading man: a full-grown, fully-animated eight-foot werewolf.

Both graduates of the U.S.C. Film School, the Indiana-born Shank brothers broke into film in the advertising department of New World Pictures. They ran the department for 14 months, overseeing campaigns for such films as *PIRANHA* and *ROCK AND ROLL HIGH SCHOOL*.

"Our first job in production almost seemed designed to make us hate it so much that we'd go running back to advertising," said Jeff Shank, referring to a stint on New World's *HUMANOIDS FROM THE DEEP*, on which they worked with a young effects supervisor named Rob Bottin. The three became close friends, and even took turns playing the slimy sea creature, though it was Steve, the one true swimmer of the group, who took most of the punishment. "I was stuck in 30 pounds of latex for upwards of 14 hours a day for three or four weeks," Steve Shank said. "As production assistants, you might say we were baptized on *HUMANOIDS*."

After *HUMANOIDS*, Jeff joined the postproduction crew for *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*, while Steve, writing original screenplays,

responded—somewhat reluctantly—to an urgent call from Bottin to help out on *THE HOWLING* on a part-time basis, running errands, ordering supplies and making deliveries. "I could immediately tell there had been very little planning," Steve said. "Mike Finnell [the producer] and Joe Dante [the director] were getting very concerned about the delays." Bottin soon called on Steve to assume the role of effects producer—to budget, schedule and evaluate the effects work and keep close watch on the various artists—Bottin included—on the payroll.

By the time Shank had assumed responsibility, nearly a third of *THE HOWLING*'s \$200,000 effects budget had been spent, with only marginal results. The largest slice had gone for the construction of three "rocket wolves," life-sized fiberglass dummies layered with hair that were designed to leap through the burning barn and jump around the fog-shrouded forest locations. "They were fired from a launcher tank through a pipe that was connected into the rectum of the wolf," said Jeff Shank, who soon joined his brother as co-effects producer after finishing his work on *BATTLE BEYOND THE STARS*. "When maximum compression was reached, the ignition system fired and the wolf would shoot out through the air, as far as 50 feet across and maybe 15 feet high."

Although the "rocket wolves" were filmed for several shots, it was clear they wouldn't do. For one, they were just stuffed animals flying through the air—and they looked it. And the compressed air left a vapor stream trailing from the wolf's rear end, an unintentionally comic touch.

Bottin had meanwhile hired Dale Kuipers to build a number of werewolf suits to use in several brief cuts, discussing with him the possibility of constructing 30 suits or more to use in one group shot of werewolves on the march. "They were all supposed to have a sculpted foam base with hair, a head, hands—everything," Steve Shank explained. "That was a lot of work, even for a big crew, and Dale was working alone! I told Dale, who was obviously working under some duress at this time, to forget about doing so many suits and to aim for four or five at the most."

But it was difficult to produce even a single, acceptable werewolf suit. Three suits were eventually constructed, but each had major drawbacks. One suit used carpet-thickness fur fabric over layers of mattress foam, a second utilized intricately-weaved ventilated hair pieces built by veteran Josephine Turner (*PLANET OF THE APES*) at a cost of \$20,000. Neither was successful.

"The problem with the suits was that the dimensions were modeled on a werewolf's scale and not a man's," explained Steve Shank. "They were too big in the wrong places. Ideally, a werewolf should be large enough to appear formidable, but svelte enough to be wolf-like. Most of the early suits



Opposite page: Jeff Shank blends crepe hair into the commercial fur fabric covering the full-scale werewolf puppet he built for *THE HOWLING*. The puppet was never used, but served as the basis for the suit Shank built later. Left: How a person fits inside a suit makes a big difference. 1) A prop head fits directly over a person's own. This simple suit, hardly more than a Halloween costume, was not considered for this film. 2) Rob Bottin designed a werewolf suit with a long, rigid "stovepipe" neck, but the full-size suit was a disappointment (see photos page 45). 3) The final werewolf suit, as designed and built by Jeff Shank. A block of wood elevated the head, allowing Shank to see out the mouth.

had bodies resembling black bears. Also, using Rob's specifications, Dale had sculpted legs that didn't successfully translate. The bone structure of an animal's leg is nowhere close to that of a man's." An additional problem with the suit—dubbed the "chipmunk suit" on the set—was its head, a rigid fiberglass extension designed by Bottin to avoid the conventional appearance of an actor wearing a prop head. Bottin's design contained a long stove-pipe neck with the head above, made so the person wearing it would hopefully achieve an animal-like quality by bending over to keep the head level with the ground. But the rigid neck didn't rotate realistically, and the top-heavy headpiece made it difficult for the actor inside to see and breathe.

The suit was used while the company was on location in the Mendocino forests, and can be briefly seen in the scene in which the transformed T.C. (Don McCleod) terrorizes Belinda Balaski. A third suit—made of fur fabric without foam padding—was also used on location for several action shots. "It was little more than a pair of fuzzy pajamas," said Jeff. "It was used for stunts, like the one at the end of the movie where the car hits one of the werewolves."

With time running short before the start of effects photography (live-ac-

tion photography was divided in half on *THE HOWLING*, with all the werewolf effects saved for last), it was essential to come up with an acceptable solution to the werewolf problem. Jeff Shank said that he could make a successful suit, but Bottin was leery of trying yet another, and suggested building a special type of werewolf puppet similar to that used in some forms of Japanese theater. The puppet had one large advantage: it wouldn't be tied into the geometry of a man inside a suit.

"Rob wanted a simple puppet, just a working prototype," Jeff said. "When he first came up with the idea of a Japanese rod puppet, I didn't think it would work. But as I began designing and building it, I realized the potential it had, not the least of which was showing the werewolf in a full-body shot." He and a small crew took two weeks to build the eight-foot puppet in the driveway of Bottin's El Monte home, startling passing motorists as the creature took shape. The puppet was built up from a core of wooden dowel rods and hollow aluminum tubing covered with foam rubber, fur fabric and different colors of crepe hair which were worked into the fur.

While the completed puppet looked complex, it was remarkably simple to operate: hand-operated cables worked the flexible wrists and the mouth; the arms were capable of violent, "swiping" movements by operating the dowels that were connected to the elbows of the puppet; the fully-articulated neck allowed free rotation of the head; and the shoulders and hips swivelled realistically.

"Dante and Finnell were in ecstasy when we showed them the puppet because it was the first thing they had that was really shootable," said Jeff. "They even took pictures to show the execs at Avco. However it did have limitations: it couldn't, for instance, walk around the room, which is what Dante wanted for the scene where the werewolf corners Belinda in the

office. But anatomically, it was a lot more correct than a suit ever could be. No one could possibly have looked at it and said, 'Aw, it's only a man in a suit.'"

But for all its capabilities, the puppet was bulky and required several people standing behind to operate the levers and cables (see diagram). Photographing the werewolf so the operators were not visible also presented difficulties. With just a little over a month remaining until effects photography was scheduled to begin, Bottin suggested building another puppet, capable of more complex movements, that could be strapped to the hips of an operator to give it mobility. Bottin also wanted to animate the arm movements with cables that ran inside the puppet, eliminating the problem of hiding the wooden dowels. But the Shanks felt another puppet would still have many of the problems of the original puppet, offer few advantages and not allow director Joe Dante any extra flexibility.

Jeff Shank again pressed for the construction of a suit that would extend down to the wearer's hips, modeled after the puppet so the two could be intercut. Bottin was still reluctant, and hired a machinist in Northern California to build a welded aluminum armature for a second puppet. Two weeks later the armature was delivered, to the dismay of the crew. "There wasn't nearly enough articulation in the movements," recalled Steve Shank. "The wrists, for example, only moved a fraction of an inch. To make hand movements believable, you need big movements.

"Jeff and I finally had to prevail on Rob to end all discussion of a second puppet," Steve added. "We had to use a suit at this point. There wasn't enough time to develop another puppet intricate enough to do all the things suggested by the script. Besides, Joe was never too keen on having to deal with a bunch of opera-

tors standing behind a puppet."

The task of building the suit was given to Jeff, since Dale Kuipers had been forced to leave the picture for personal reasons and Shank had worked out many of the design problems while building the puppet. "Once I took the werewolf suit on, I was on my own," Jeff said. "Bottin chose the look—a wolf that looked like a big dog with animal legs—and made the foam latex face of the werewolf. But I made the drawing of what I thought the werewolf should look like. It was my design, my baby.

"I had less than three weeks to complete the suit," Jeff added, "and there were a number of modifications I wanted to make on the puppet in order to solidify the final suit design. For instance, the first puppet's mouth was relatively small—only the front teeth and fangs were visible. I wanted a much more menacing mouth, one that would open a lot wider."

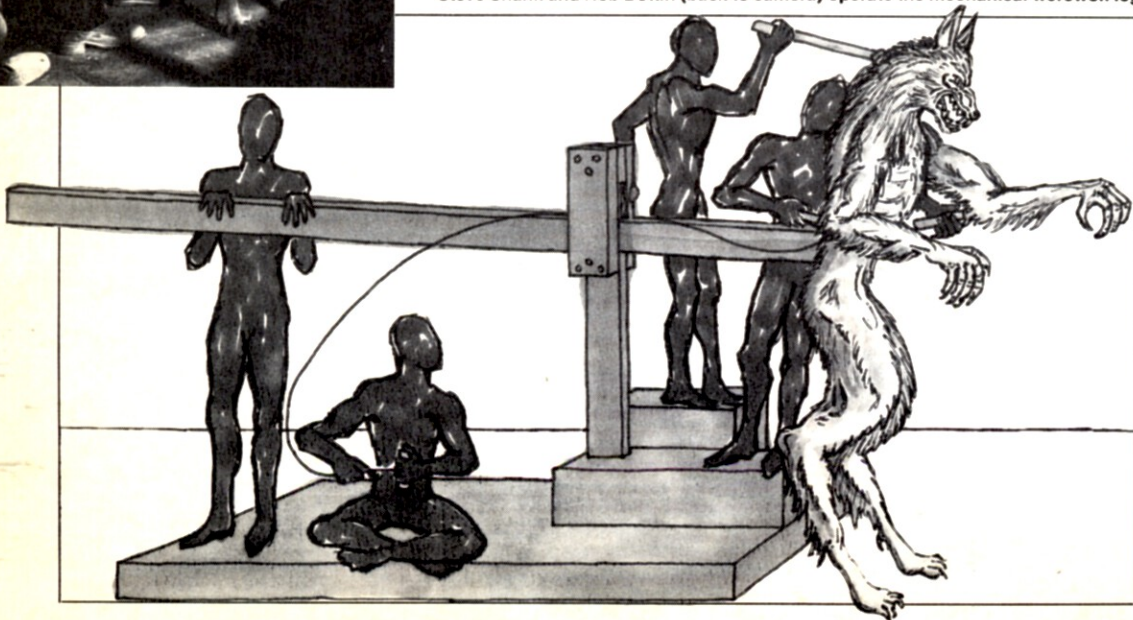
Shank resculpted the mouth, enlarging the teeth and exposing them all the way back along the sides of the jaws. Bottin modified his sculpture of the face and makeup artist Greg Cannon ran off a new slip cover latex face. "I also felt that the hands I had originally used on the puppet were too small," he said. "So while I began mechanizing the head for the suit, Shawn McEnroe sculpted a pair of enlarged hands, which turned out beautifully."

To provide legs for the suit, Bottin suggested cutting off the legs of the puppet, but Shank felt the puppet could still be used to good advantage and had Ed Jensen model a duplicate pair of mechanical legs based on those of the puppet. Shank also modified the puppet to better match the look of the suit, shortening the arms to match his own and outfitting it with a duplicate pair of Shawn McEnroe's new, improved hands.

By now it was clear that Shank would not only be building the film's werewolf, but *playing* it as well (an



Below: To operate Jeff Shank's werewolf puppet, several persons were needed to manipulate the dowels that controlled the head, arm and body, and the cable-activated mechanisms that controlled the face and mouth. Right: Jeff Shank (right) and Shawn McEnroe work on the puppet in its early stages; layers of foam rubber "muscles" cover the wooden armature. Left: Steve Shank and Rob Bottin (back to camera) operate the mechanical werewolf legs built by Ed Jensen to match the puppet's.





Above: Director Joe Dante confers with Jeff Shank (in suit) between takes. Dante is crouching because Shank could only see out the werewolf's mouth. **Far Left:** Dale Kuipers poses with the un-furred form of the first full-sized suit. It was used on location (left), but scrapped due to problems with its bulk, and the "stove-pipe" neck. **Below:** Shank's sketch of the werewolf's face, indicating movements in the eyebrows (1), eyes (2), cheek (3), upper and lower lip (4 & 5) and mouth (6).

height; the block was firmly attached to the top of a rigid, full-head skull cap that cut across Shank's face at the cheek bones and had large holes cut out for his eyes. The head was attached to the suit—a one-piece affair with a zipper up the spine—

by a series of safety pins, which were hidden by the fur fabric.

The control cables—which were operated by nearly everyone on the effects crew at one time or another—were fitted onto the fiberglass shell and strung down the back of the suit, where they exited through a hole in the leg of Shank's black spandex undersuit. For the final touch, both the head and body were covered with varying shades of an aerosol hair-coloring product called "Spray and Tips" to match the existing werewolf footage.

When the suit was finally brought to the set—with Jeff Shank inside, of course—reaction was overwhelmingly positive: **THE HOWLING**, Dante agreed, finally had its full-sized werewolf. But little of that first day of filming ever reached the screen. "I was up three days and three nights to finish the suit, because time was running out," Jeff said. "Needless to say, the first day I was out with the suit, I was a zombie. I could hardly move."

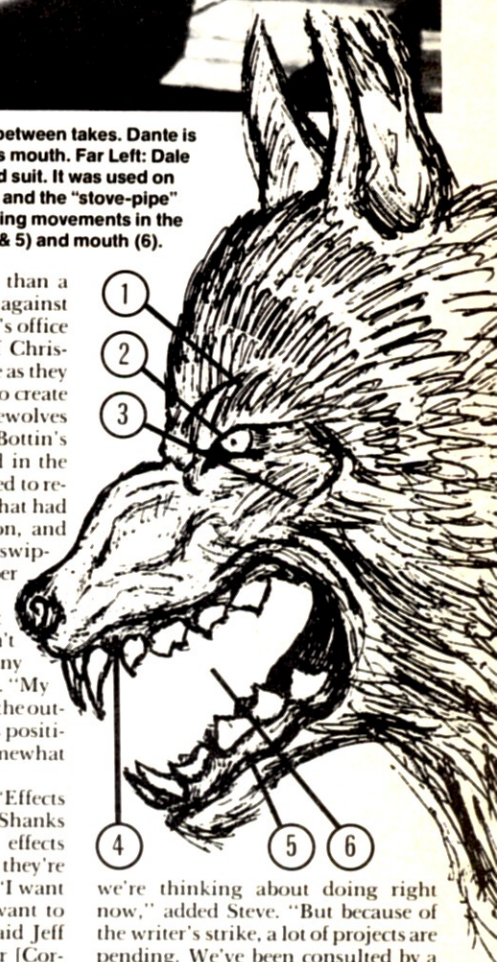
Subsequent days were somewhat more productive. In all, Shank per-

formed in the suit for more than a week, including the attack against Belinda Belaski in the doctor's office and the attack on the car of Christopher Stone and Dee Wallace as they sped away from the retreat. To create the impression of *several* werewolves surrounding the car, two of Bottin's puppet heads were also used in the foreground. Dante also decided to reshoot some of the sequences that had already been shot on location, and Shank was filmed lunging, swiping and growling at a number of targets.

Life inside the suit wasn't pleasant. Though weight wasn't a problem—as is the case in many makeup suits—breathing was. "My head wasn't very accessible to the outside because of the way it was positioned," Shank said. "It was somewhat claustrophobic."

With their screen credit of "Effects Unit Line Producers," the Shanks could easily keep busy with effects projects for years to come, but they're hoping for something more. "I want to get away from effects. I want to produce. I want to direct," said Jeff Shank. "I kept telling Roger [Corman, head of New World] that I wanted to produce. Now that I did **THE HOWLING**, he wants me to serve as art director and do special effects on one of his films. I do one film where I'm responsible for making a werewolf and automatically I'm labeled as an effects guy! I can do a lot of different things."

"We've got a number of things that



we're thinking about doing right now," added Steve. "But because of the writer's strike, a lot of projects are pending. We've been consulted by a number of people. We're also in the midst of writing scripts."

For the Shanks, the ultimate brass ring is a producer's chair, where they get to call the shots. "My brother and I feel that producing is crucial, especially for films that require special effects," said Steve. "We're very interested in making our own films someday." □

uncredited performance), since the suit was being tailored to his 6'6" form. "I was the only one tall enough, thin enough and dumb enough to do it," he joked.

The head was the first part of the suit to be completed, and Shank busied himself engineering a series of cable-activated movements, drawing upon the brilliant techniques developed by Rick Baker for **KING KONG** and passed along to Bottin for the ape in **TANYA'S ISLAND** [10:1:24]. "I realized the only way to divert attention away from the neck problem we had in the previous suits was to make the face as compelling as possible," Jeff said. "To that end I packed ten facial mechanics into the head, six into the snout alone. By giving the upper and lower lips movement, as well as each cheek, the quality of the latex foam created the look of real musculature."

The design of the suit allowed the head to rotate, and made it possible for Shank to see out the werewolf's spring-loaded mouth. The top of the werewolf head was elevated slightly by a block of wood to increase its

REVIEWS

Here's a fantasy with teeth, graced by magnificent special effects

DRAGONSLAYER

A Paramount Pictures release, 6/81, 108 mins. In color and Dolby stereo. Directed by Matthew Robbins. Produced by Hal Barwood. Written by Barwood and Robbins. Executive producer, Howard W. Koch. Director of photography, Derek Vanlint. Production designer, Elliot Scott. Edited by Tony Lawson. Music by Alex North. Costume designer, Anthony Mendleson. Sound designer, Dale Strumpell. Supervisor of special mechanical effects, Brian Johnson. Supervisor of miniature and optical effects, Dennis Muren. Dragon supervisors, Phil Tippett, Ken Ralston. Dragon design, graphics & titles, David Bunnell. Art director, Alan Cassie. Makeup by Graham Freeborn, Jane Royle. Special effects technicians, David Watkins, Philip Knowles, Neil Swann, John Gant, P.W. Hutchinson, Andrew Kelley. Dragon action props, Danny Lee, Walt Disney Studios. Halo crane, Nick Alder, Dennis Low, Ray Evans. Dragon movers, Christopher Walas Tom St. Amand, Stuart Ziff, Gary Leo, John Berg. Miniature set design, Dave Carson. Matte painting supervisor, Alan Maley. Animation supervisor, Samuel Comstock. Animators, Dietrich Friesen, Garry Waller, Loring Doyle, John Van Vliet, Kim Knowlton, Judy Elkins, Sylvia Keulen, Scott Caple. Additional animation, Peter Kuran, Visual Concept Engineering.

Galen Peter MacNicol
Valerian Caitlin Clarke
Ulrich Ralph Richardson
Tyrian John Hallam
Casidorus Rex Peter Eyre
Greil Albert Salmi
Hodge Sidney Bromley
Princess Elspeth Chloe Salaman
Simon Emrys James

Ralph Richardson, not only as the character Ulrich, elderly master sorcerer, but as an actor, adds a fine lot of magic to the initial sequences of DRAGONSLAYER. Summoned by a raggedy delegation of citizens from a faraway village to do battle with the dragon plaguing their land—a monster kept in check only by the twice-yearly sacrifice of a virgin—Ulrich manages only a few steps away from his cavern-like home, Cragganmore, when he gets killed off. His young apprentice (Peter MacNicol), clutching Ulrich's

magic amulet, takes his place and sets off with the despondent villagers.

DRAGONSLAYER is essentially a Paramount film, produced and shot at Pinewood Studios in London and on locations in Wales and Scotland. The co-credited Walt Disney studios chipped in some production money and loaned personnel to provide the film's full-scale dragon effects (George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic facility did the post-production effects work). Yet the story, written by Spielberg proteges Hal Barwood and Matthew Robbins, is pure live-action Disney. DRAGONSLAYER is a tale of a youth coming of age, seeking his identity, suffering the trials that will make him an adult and discovering the love that will make him a man. At the end the dragon is killed, and he and the girl (Caitlin Clarke) ride off together on a white horse.

It's our good fortune, however, that the story has not been rendered into puerile Disney juvenilia. DRAGONSLAYER is no simple-minded family frolic—it is a tough, adult movie which works like some great trashing satire of a Disney movie. There is ample bloodshed, and many of the lead characters are killed. When MacNicol comes upon the three offspring of the dragon in its dank, hellish lair, they are hard at work devouring the corpse of a beautiful princess, a monstrous parody of Disney's fairy-tale niceties and cuddly animals.

Robbins modulates his themes sufficiently. When the amulet is passed on to MacNicol, we expect him instantly to gain the knowledge to use it, but he does not —he

seems more at home with simple parlor tricks. He must learn, often by failure, to control, sharpen and experience his powers. As an example, the landslide he sets off early in the film in the vain hope of burying the dragon in its lair rages out of control, and he and the watching villagers must flee to safety. Whether he has achieved the status of sorcerer by the film's end is left ambiguous (although if the film is successful and a sequel goes on the boards, we can assume he has).

The picture has its problems, of course. It bogs down somewhat after Richardson's demise some 20 minutes into it (he has foreseen not only his own death but the entire course of events in the story). Also, director Robbins loses out to some pedestrian dialogue; a few unintentionally hilarious clinkers annoyingly subvert the solidly realistic vision of coarse medieval life rendered by Elliot Scott's sometimes remarkable production design (oddly enough, for all the money spent, the movie is not as physically, or perhaps emotionally, convincing as a couple of the Monty Python mini-epics).

But as might be expected, if one knew nothing about the film save its title, the movie succeeds or fails on the strengths of the dragon, and it is here that the filmmakers have scored an impressive coup. Through a marvelously veiled combination of stop-motion animation and full-scale body parts, they have managed an extraordinary creation: a beast just short of exhibiting a personality.

The effects work, which cost a full quarter of the film's \$16 million budget, is nearly flawless. That's no mean feat on the part of Robbins (who effectively directed all of the live-action pieces and fit them in convincingly) and his army of special effects technicians and artists. Perhaps the highest compliment one can possibly pay to the special effects in any

film is to say that such tricks are invisible or, at least, seemingly effortless. DRAGONSLAYER most certainly achieves these qualities, and it does so in fine style.

The dragon, nicknamed "Vermithrax Pejorative" (literally, "the evil worm of Thrace") during pre-production, is an intelligent thing of lumbering, fiery evil, and when it takes to the air, its natural habitat, in the second of the two rousing battles, it is no less than magnificent. If some cynical part of us holds us back from believing in the real existence of magic through most of the movie, the dragon makes us believers, even when Richardson, who returns from the dead (which we'd expected he'd do) turns himself into a sort of nuclear device, triggered by MacNicol, to finally kill it.

The story is uncomplicated, even trite, and fans of sword and sorcery (which genre is probably only fully capturable in a completely animated film) are likely to be disappointed by its lack of inventive flash (apart from the dragon effects). There is traditional comic relief, although thankfully not provided by a cute-as-shit R2D2-ish critter (which so mars CLASH OF THE TITANS).

The movie becomes portentous only at the end, as Barwood and Robbins attempt to couple the death of the dragon, a momentous historic change in the lives of the villagers, with the mythic loss of Ulrich (as with Merlin in EXCALIBUR, the sorcerer is a dying breed) and the sweeping cultural change of the ending of the emergence of Christianity, signaled by the baptism of the villagers (awkwardly led by new zealot Albert Salmi, a familiar, ham-faced character actor who usually plays a villain). The film's final, somewhat sour laugh—in which the king takes credit for the dragon kill—shows us that while dragons and magic may fade away in time, politics never changes. *David Bartholomew*

Left & Inset: ILM's magnificent motion-control dragon, a significant advance in the art of stop-motion effects. Below: ILM's hand-puppet baby dragon menaces Caitlin Clarke. Right: The mechanical dragon supplied by Disney's Danny Lee.



Sooner or later Carpenter will make the film that'll put him in the majors. This isn't it.

ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

An Avco Embassy release, 7.81, 99 mins. In color and Dolby stereo. Directed by John Carpenter. Produced by Larry Franco, Debra Hill. Screenplay by Carpenter and Nick Castle. Director of photography, Dean Cudde. Editor, Todd Ramsay. Music by John Carpenter, in association with Alan Howarth. Production designer, Joe Alves. Makeup by Ken Chase, Ben Douglas. Special effects supervisor, Roy Arbogast. Producer liaison—special visual effects, Mary Ann Fisher. Project supervisor, R.J. Kizer. Directors of photography—special visual effects, Jim Cameron, George Dodge, Dennis Skotak, Austin McKinney, Elicon camera operators, Dr. Den Jones, Steve Elliott, Julia Gibson. Miniatures by Brian Chin. Mattes by Jim Cameron, Jena Holman, Bob Skotak. Sound editors, David Yewdall, Warren Hamilton.

Snake Plissken Kurt Russell
 Commissioner Hawk Lee Van Cleef
 The President Donald Pleasance
 The Duke Issac Hayes
 Brain Harry Dean Stanton
 Cabbie Ernest Borgnine
 Maggie Adrienne Barbeau
 Girl Season Hubley
 Romero Frank Doubleday

The smart money still rides on the talents of director John Carpenter (DARK STAR, ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13, HALLOWEEN). Sooner or later, he'll make the breakthrough film that will catapult him solidly into the big league. Unfortunately, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, like last summer's THE FOG, isn't it. While it is one of the summer's most entertaining pleasure machines, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK serves mostly as an appetizer for better THING(s) to come.

Carpenter's newest film is a dark, comic vision of the future. The year is 1997, and Manhattan Island is a maximum-security prison, an end-of-the-line, gang-infested hell hole. The crime rate has risen over 400%, and three million hardcases are sealed behind the 50-foot containment wall that encircles the island. Into this maelstrom, the President (Donald Pleasance), while en route to a peace summit, is force-lanced by a terrorist group. Wily, snarling "Snake" Plissken (Kurt Russell) is given 24 hours to get the President out or be blown to smithereens by the explosives planted in his neck. All the plot screws are in place, all right, but Carpenter is amazingly slow in applying them.

ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, made for a comparatively puny \$7 million, represents Carpenter's up-town move. Although it is graced by the mighty contributions of production designer Joe Alves (you can practically hear him goading everyone to THINK BIG), it is the film's smaller, looney-tunes physical details that give it snap; the ragged, psychotic



Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) asks directions from Brain (Harry Dean Stanton).

crazies who roam above and below the city's hellish streets like human packrats; a scary, almost-love scene in a scorched-out Chock Full O' Nuts; the lighted candelabra on the hood of the "Duke of New York's" stretch limo; the gallows humor of a left-for-dead theater where a male chorus sings "Everyone's Coming to New York" in drag; the grated-over windows of a Yellow Cab zig-zagging toward the landmined 69th Street Bridge to the strains of the AMERICAN BANDSTAND theme. This is nice, sly stuff, but it's not enough to fuel ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK's surprisingly enervated rhythm.

The broad-stroke star-turns by Harry Dean Stanton, Season Hubley (Russell's wife), Pleasance and Ernest Borgnine work wonders in fleshing out paltry characterizations and goosing the stop-start screenplay into gear. There isn't an actor on this picture who doesn't look primed for a rousing good time, but they are all given so little to say that most of them are reduced to attitudes hiding behind costumes.

Russell, who did such fine work on Carpenter's TV film ELVIS, does a mean parody of Clint Eastwood and, with his eye patch and leather shirt, has terrific on-screen presence. His

performance, however, wears thin after the first twenty minutes or so, since he has nothing to do but snarl, shoot and run.

Adrienne Barbeau, as a tart-faced gun-moll, trades a few jibes with the monotone hero ("Snake Plissken? I thought you were dead!"), but, like so much in ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, the sexy banter is dropped and the characters run breathlessly for a few more reels. By the time Russell and the band of burn-outs group together for the big effort, even though Carpenter's slambang editing and action take off like a firecracker, it's almost too late for us to care. Doesn't Carpenter realize we're longing to see some hokey, Hawksian, B-movie camaraderie?

Dean Cudney's cinematography uses Panaglide extensively and has a handsome, big-movie feel in its use of nighttime landscapes from the inferno. New World/Venice and Roy Arbogast are to be applauded for their realizations of a ravaged city where beheadings, detonations of landmines, plane crashes and molotov cocktails are commonplace.

Finally, for those who find that sort of thing reassuring, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK is studded with in-jokes that score on everything from THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (very wittily) to George Romero to David Cronenberg—enough to assure anyone picking up on all of them at least six months' membership in the National Society of Movie Trivia Aficionados. *Stephen Rebello*

Script staginess dooms Hyams' updated oater

OUTLAND

A Ladd Company release through Warner Bros. 5.81, 109 mins. In Technicolor and Dolby stereo. Written and directed by Peter Hyams. Produced by Richard A. Roth. Executive Producer, Stanley O'Toole. Music by Jerry Goldsmith. Editor, Stuart Baird. Production designer, Philip Harrison. Director of photography, Stephen Goldblatt. Art director, Malcolm Middleton. Costume designer, John Mollo. Special effects by John Stears. Special optical effects supervised by Roy Field. Supervising model makers, Martin Bower, Bill Pearson. Model engineer, Roy Scott. Makeup, Peter Robb-King. Introvision optical effects by John Eppolito, Tom Naud, Tim Donahue, Bill Mesa.

O'Neil Sean Connery
 Sheppard Peter Boyle
 Lazarus Frances Sternhagen
 Montone James B. Sicking
 Carol Kika Markham
 Ballard Clarke Peters
 Sagan Steven Berkoff
 Tarlow John Katzenberger
 Paul O'Neil Nicholas Barnes

"Ya did good" runs like a bucolic refrain through the thin script of the long-awaited OUTLAND, a less than gentle reminder that it is meant to be a kind of "SERPICO AT HIGH NOON" set on Jupiter's satellite Io. The remark serves better as an ironic commentary on what writer-director Peter Hyams has not done. Despite its technical achievements, OUTLAND only blows up an ill-conceived, incredibly fatuous plot to outlandish 70mm proportions. Space may well prove Hyams' final frontier—and not the way he intended.

There is, after all, something all

too fitting about transposing this stale storyline from the Old West to the airlessness of outer space. In Hyams' retelling of the Fred Zinneman Carl Foreman western classic HIGH NOON, Federal Marshall William T. O'Neil (Sean Connery) arrives at the titanium mining colony Con-Am 27 to learn that General Manager Sheppard (Peter Boyle) has been feeding his workers a drug that boosts their productivity before it ultimately bursts their brains.

Because, however, OUTLAND is an "update," O'Neil's darling (Kika Markham) does forsake him this time, and he also discovers—a sign more of the 1980s—that cops like his deputy James B. Sicking are on the take to keep quiet. Whatever the odds, of course, you just can't keep a Good Guy down. Connery's hardheaded resolution to curb the drug-trafficking forces Boyle to call his higher-ups at the space station who send down a couple of assassins on the next weekly shuttle. The supposedly dramatic countdown on the screen in the colony lounge marks more the remaining minutes to the movie than it does the question of Connery's fate.

Technically the film does have some merits. The Dolby Stereo enhances the suspense—however contrived—when Connery and the com-

pany doctor hear noises off-screen from their approaching pursuers. And although the gimmick is hardly unique—Ridley Scott used it to better effect in ALIEN—cinematographer Stephen Goldblatt diffracts light through gratings and diffuses it through studio fog (inside the artificial air of the colony?) to lend an eerie air to the stalking of the heroes at the film's climax.

Art director Malcolm Middleton and production designer Philip Harrison provide starkly functional, penitentiary-like sets of the colony's interior. The miniatures of the refinery itself, built in three months by Bill Pearson and Martin Bower, likewise elevate function over beauty. The new optical effect Introvision adds further to the film's authentic feel by blending live actors into threateningly realistic exteriors. (We may wonder, however, why Hyams set his story on Io, the actively volcanic surface of which is never integrated into the plot. Our own moon would have done just as well.)

The problem, unfortunately, is that all this external hardness is only skin deep. It's never fleshed out in the characters or even with the plot devices and hardware they're saddled with. Interestingly, it is Hyams' very

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OUTLAND

continued from page 47

obsession with realism, in a technical rather than narrative sense, that points up the staggering improbabilities at the heart of the story.

In Connery's case, to begin with, we tend to side with his wife when she sneaks off with their son to the space station rather than face another one of his bleak assignments. His character shoulders a kind of over-10 jadedness, but for a cynic who's had more than his share of bad duties, his optimistic resignation and dedication to justice seem almost schizotypic.

One of the few times we believe in his crustiness is during a testy tete-a-tete with hard-looking Dr. Lazarus (soap-opera renegade Frances Sternhagen). It's also one of the few times Hyams demonstrates the saving penchant for witty repartee that salvaged much of his CAPRICORN I from sappiness. All Connery's sarcasm does, though, is inspire Sternhagen to rise to the level of a grudgingly respectful sidekick later on.

Worst of all, the villains are not

very villainous. Hard-boiled as Boyle is supposed to be, we never see him as anything but a good egg who zealously appreciates the American Way and a good game of holographic golf. To illustrate just how menacing Boyle *really* can be, notice what Hyams has him do when Connery gets to be a pain on his asteroid: he immediately calls for help from the outside! With over two thousand people already there to do his bidding? Some General Manager!

Enter the hired guns, Con Am's "best," armed with—gasp!—infrared shotguns and amazing stupidity. They die effortlessly through Connery's less than cunning devices, via exposure to vacuum (a repetitive gimmick Hyams unimaginatively uses in six of the film's eight deaths). Why equip men in an artificial atmosphere on an airless world with shotguns capable of tearing gaping holes in the walls of that environment? Besides, how can such firearms actually fire without air as they do in Connery's showdown with a surprise enemy? It's this incredible staginess

that brings down the curtain on any sense of real suspense.

Even the wit that could have at least added some polish to the screenplay fails Hyams, especially during the embarrassingly maudlin scenes when his wife explains why she has left him and when Connery tells his wife and son how much he loves them before shuffling off to his showdown.

It's all a show—and of all the wrong things—that makes OUTLAND so outrageously bad. Hyams' trying to relate a story of hardened characters in a grimy world of the future is, finally, like Snow White trying to write an expose on Fanne Fox. With so many technical tricks and talents like Connery and Sternhagen waiting to be mimed, Hyams taps only a vein of vacuum-packed gas. He neither knows the traditions of good science fiction nor respects the classics of film history that, short of satire, should be left alone.

"Outlandish" used to describe what foreigners looked like to the natives—often inappropriately dressed or prepared for the occasion. With



Shotguns in space—Clark Peters as shoot-'em-in-the-back Deputy Ballard.

regard to his and this film's place in the genre, Peter Hyams has, like his heroes, done good at least in one respect: he's inadvertently picked the perfect title. *Steven Dimeo*

This contrived silliness would put William Castle to shame

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME

A Columbia Pictures release, 5 81, 108 mins. In color. Directed by J. Lee Thompson. Produced by John Dunning and Andre Link. Screenplay, John Saxton, Peter Jobin, Timothy Bond. Photography by Miklos Lente. Editor, Debra Karen. Sound, Richard Lightstone. Production design, Earl Preston. Music by Bo Harwood, Lance Rubin. Special effects co-ordinators, King Hernandez, Bill Doane, Warren Keillor, Ron Ottosen. Special makeup effects by The Burman Studio.

Virginia Melissa Sue Anderson
Dr. Faraday Glenn Ford
Ann Tracy Bregman
Alfred Jack Blum
Steve Matt Craven
Maggie Lenore Zann
Rudi David Eisner
Amelia Lisa Langlois
Etienne Michel Rene Labelle
Estelle Sharon Acker

Revenge, though not among man's nobler motives, is certainly one of the most profitable, at least as far as Hollywood's concerned. The recent glut

of stalk-and-slash thrillers inspired by HALLOWEEN has dealt heavily in revenge, and this preoccupation reaches a convoluted apex in HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME.

Virginia Wainwright (Melissa Sue Anderson) is a student at the exclusive Crawford Academy, to which she is returning after recovering from an auto accident that killed her mother. She is plagued with self-doubt and blackouts, and she wonders if she is responsible when her friends begin disappearing. It's murder, you see, accompanied by the familiar elements: agitated string music, dark hallways, thunderstorms and (ye gods!) subjective camera cleverness.

To his credit, director J. Lee Thompson is better at staging this stuff than a lot of his younger compet-

itors. He has had genre experience (THE REINCARNATION OF PETER PROUD, CONQUEST OF BATTLE FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES, EYE OF THE DEVIL) and has shown himself a competent craftsman. His camera is mobile throughout HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME, his shots nicely composed, so his brand of predictability is better than most.

The ritual murders, however, are carried out with little suspense and unreal like a documentary on inventive teen homicide. One kid is mashed by a barbell, another is skewered on a shishkebab, a third is garroted when his scarf is tossed into the wheel of his motorcycle. While not as "bizarre" as the ads promise, the murders are certainly disagreeably bloody—when a man is smacked on the head with a poker, the walls become awash with blood.

The plot twists devised by the three screenwriters (John Saxton, Peter Jobin, Timothy Bond) grow increasingly contrived and mechanical, culminating in split-screen silliness that would have embarrassed William Castle. Masquerades, mistaken identity, misperceived language and Virginia's heretofore undreamed-of half-sister figure in the denouement. The film is a child's version of Hitchcock. The primary sin of the victims, it seems, is upper-class snobbishness. Mrs. Wainwright died after she and Virginia were denied invitation to a party of the girl's snooty classmates. This occurred on Virginia's birthday, so the rebuff and fatal accident which followed inspire the murders years later.

I fear we haven't progressed much: Monogram made this sort of film forty years ago with nearly as much

success. Once upon a time, Bela Lugosi played the red herring—often wearing a burnoose—and we have one here, but now it's a bespectacled kid in a grungy field jacket whose best friend is a rat named George.

We also have an ominously over-protective psychiatrist (Glenn Ford), the raving, alcoholic mother (nicely played by Sharon Acker) and Virginia herself, who may or may not be psychotic as a result of the experimental brain surgery (graphically depicted) that saved her life after the accident. This sort of raucous character development allows actors to exercise their lungs and contort their faces, but does not give an audience the island of sanity necessary for empathic involvement. When *everyone* in the film seems demented, the viewer has difficulty caring what happens to any of them.

The young victims spend their free time drinking beer, starting fights and risking their lives with idiotic car stunts. And when the young weight-lifter is confronted by the female killer (her face obscured) as he is pumping iron, he does not wonder why she is wearing gloves and guerrilla black in the middle of summer, but says only, "Oh, it's you. Add on twenty-five more pounds, willya?" It's not that these kids are so bad that they must die, but that they're too dumb to *live*.

Melissa Sue Anderson makes good use of her broody attractiveness but is a bit too unbalanced to be truly sympathetic. She *does* throw a good party, though; the climactic birthday celebration, with its party-hatted corpses slumped around the table, is good, derivative fun. And why not? After all, a girl turns Sweet Psychotic only once. *David J. Hogan*

Melissa Sue Anderson turns sweet psychotic and sings HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME.



Lucas & Spielberg revive slam-bang, Saturday-matinee thrills

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK

A Paramount Pictures release, 6/81, 115 mins. In color and Dolby stereo. Directed by Steven Spielberg. Produced by Frank Marshall. Screenplay by Lawrence Kasdan. Story by George Lucas and Philip Kaufman. Executive producers, George Lucas and Howard Kazanjian. Music, John Williams. Edited by Michael Kahn. Director of photography, Douglas Slocombe. Production designer, Norman Reynolds. Second unit director, Michael Moore. Stunt coordinator, Glenn Randall. Costume design, Deborah Nadoolman. Visual effects supervisor, Richard Edlund. Mechanical effects supervisor, Kit West. Art director, Leslie Dilley. Chief makeup artist, Tom Smith. Makeup artist, Dickie Mills. Stunt arranger, Peter Diamond. Sound design, Ben Burt. Optical photography supervisor (ILM), Bruce Nicholson. Production supervisor (ILM), Thomas Smith. Art director-visual effects (ILM), Joe Johnston. Matte painting supervisor (ILM), Alan Maley. Special makeup effects, Christopher Walas.

Indiana Jones	Harrison Ford
Marion	Karen Allen
Dietrich	Wolf Kahler
Belloq	Paul Freeman
Toht	Ronald Lacey
Sallah	John Rhys-Davies
Brody	Denholm Elliott
Gobler	Anthony Higgins
Satipo	Alfred Molina
Barranca	Vic Tablino

A daring American adventurer locks horns with the Nazis in North Africa in a struggle to secure ancient religious artifacts that the Germans believe will help them conquer the world. This is the plot of SECRET SERVICE IN DARKEST AFRICA, a 15-chapter Republic serial from 1943 and the basis of RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, exec producer George Lucas' homage to an art form which died twenty-five years ago. The films are brothers, separated only by time, money and technology.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK features the combined talents of

Lucas, Steven Spielberg (the two are long-time friends) and an army of special effects personnel from Lucas' ILM facility. Lucas, who has long wanted to do his own version of the adventure films he loved as a kid, screened several of the old serials in preparation for the film, and their influence is felt throughout. Spielberg admits he initially was gun-shy of helming another big-budget project after the panning the press gave his 1941. Nevertheless, he signed on and kept RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK within its \$20 million budget (still almost twice the negative cost of Republic's entire twenty-year serial output).

The results of the Lucas/Spielberg teaming are dynamite. From the opening, which could be a recap of a previous chapter with Indiana Jones facing a host of dangers in a South American temple, to the rousing confrontation with the forces of the Ark, the film carries its audience on a veritable roller coaster ride.

Indy Jones, an archeologist/adventurer, is recruited by Army Intelligence to prevent the Nazis from uncovering the Lost Ark of the Covenant, a biblical casket—said to be a source of great power—that contains the shattered tablets of the original Ten Commandments. It seems that Adolph Hitler is into mysticism and believes the ark will make him invincible.

Indy is opposed in his mission by Belloq (Paul Freeman), an unscrupulous rival who has joined the Nazis to further his own ends, and is assisted by Marion Ravenwood, (Karen Allen, looking and sounding too much like Margot Kidder's Lois Lane). Ravenwood, an old girlfriend and daughter of Indy's mentor, has a right hook that would put Linda Stirling, Republic's plucky heroine, to shame.

Harrison Ford is ideal as Jones: intelligent and intrepid. Jones is Rex Bennett, Duncan Richards and Larry Grayson—all the old serial heroes—rolled into one. But, unlike his alter egos, Jones has human foibles and

limits to his endurance. After his incredible escape from a tribe of Amazonian Indians, Jones finds a slithering python in the cockpit of his rescue plane and loudly voices his hatred of snakes. "Show a little backbone," the pilot admonishes him. This scene sets Indy up for a later confrontation with a sea of snakes.

Unlike James Bond and other macho hero types, Jones is not indefatigable. Having survived those snakes, a narrow escape from a tomb, fistfights and a harrowing truck ride, he is finally able to relax safely aboard ship. Just when it seems a romantic interlude between Jones and Marion is about to commence, our stalwart hero falls asleep. What would 007 say?

Lucas plays it safe by placing the action in 1936. By using Nazis, the most recognizable heavies in the world, he immediately darkens the proceedings. Grey areas disappear and are replaced by stark black and white forces. When the powers of God burn off the swastika from a crate housing the Ark, everyone knows which side He's on.

As Toht, Ronald Lacey is a snivelling, sadistic, archetypal Nazi villain, with his black leather trench coat draped over his shoulders and a mirthless cackle on his lips. The audience is so set up by this character, we expect the worst when he foils one of Marion's escapes and then coolly produces a chain-link device. When he assembles it into a coat hanger, the laughs that follow are an understanding that we've been had.

The film has boundless energy. So fast is the action that there is no time to realize the improbability of it all—and it really doesn't matter anyway. When Belloq and the Germans are escaping with the Ark, Jones says, "I'm going after that truck." When asked how he is going to accomplish this while stranded in the middle of the desert, he says "I don't know, I'm making this up as I go along." He finds a horse and, in the best tradition of the genre, goes racing after the

treasure. The resulting chase is one of the most exciting action sequences on film, highlighted by a masterful variation on the old Yakima Canutt stunt where a man hauls himself along the underside of a racing stagecoach.

RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK uses its special effects solely to carry the story and as background. Mattes help a vintage Pan American clipper to sail over the Golden Gate Bridge. A billowing thunderstorm adds atmosphere to the descent into the Well of Souls, wherein rests the Ark. Most impressive is the climactic scene in which the Ark is opened and its hidden powers unleashed. First we're treated to a swirl of spectral wraiths resembling escapees from Disneyland's Haunted Mansion, but suddenly they turn into death's heads, bringing a grisly end to Belloq and the Germans in an orgy of exploding, melting heads and incinerating bodies.

John Williams, probably the finest composer of screen music today, has created another memorable score, with a stirring main theme. The London Symphony Orchestra lends immeasurably to the audience reactions when, for example, Indy manages to scramble aboard the German submarine safely. Yeoman Republic composers William Lava or Mort Glickman couldn't have done better.

Spielberg and Lucas, two of the most prominent filmmakers of the day, are able to exercise what Stephen King refers to as "the muscles of the imagination" and to make an audience believe in their fancies. They have managed to avoid the disastrous pit of relevance which has consumed many of their contemporaries and instead have opted for what their audience wants: entertainment. In RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, they have brought back the excitement of the Saturday matinee, given us a hero to cheer for and provided two hours of unadulterated fun. Slam-bang action is back. Let's hope it sticks around. Dan Scapperotti



Right: Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones plays tag with a huge boulder. Jones is a throwback to all the square-jawed heroes of Republic serials. Above: Charles Quigley as Duncan Richards in THE CRIMSON GHOST (1946), with sidekick Linda Stirling. RAIDERS heroine Karen Allen has the same pluck.



Below: Rod Cameron (right) as agent Rex Bennett foils Nazi Kurt Katch's plans to subvert the Arabs in SECRET SERVICE IN DARKEST AFRICA (1943).



A valuable exhumation—even the film's flaws are interesting

THE HAUNTING OF JULIA

A Discovery Films release, 1981. Directed by Richard Loncraine. Produced by Peter Fetterman and Alfred Pariser. Screenplay by Dave Humphries. Executive producer, Julian Melzack. Production supervisor, Hugh Harlow. Cameraman, Peter Hannan. Makeup by Dickie Mills. Edited by Ron Wisman. Art director, Brian Morris.

Julia	.....	Mia Farrow
Magnus	.....	Kier Dullea
Mark	.....	Tom Conti
Lily	.....	Jill Bennett
Swift	.....	Robin Gammell
Mrs. Rudge	.....	Cathleen Nesbitt
Mrs. Flood	.....	Anna Wing
Mrs. Branscombe	.....	Pauline Jameson
Mr. Branscombe	.....	Peter Sallis
Olivia	.....	Samantha Gates

Creators of the supernatural must be careful not to give their ghosts too much scope. Though specters are usually granted human shape, they mustn't be granted complete human license or they'll seem ridiculous. Ghosts shouldn't take cabs unless they are the ghosts of people murdered in cabs; they shouldn't have the run of an entire city unless the city is entirely under the dominion of evil. In a good ghost story, we are given a very specific idea of the perimeter of ghostly influence and the reasons for this influence.

That sums up the main problem with *THE HAUNTING OF JULIA*, a potentially classic haunted-house story that unfortunately requires the haunting to keep leaving the house. An adaptation of the novel *Julia* by Peter Straub (*Ghost Story*), the film itself must seem something of a phan-

tom to its director, Richard Loncraine, writer, Dave Humphries, and cast and crew; shot in 1976 as *FULL CIRCLE*, this British/Canadian production disappeared after a disastrous opening in London. Bought by John Simon's independent distribution company, Discovery Films, the film finally has been given its U.S. premiere in Washington, D.C. Its exhumation is a worthwhile endeavor. Even the film's flaws are interesting.

A wealthy English couple, Julia and Magnus Lofting, lose their only child in a tragic accident: while frantically trying to save her little girl from choking to death on a piece of food, Julia (Mia Farrow) slices into her daughter's throat with a knife. Two infuriatingly placid, bland-faced ambulance drivers summoned by Magnus (Keir Dullea) arrive to find Julia standing in the middle of the room, feet fixed but torso trembling, drenched in her daughter's blood.

The cut from this awful sight to Julia lying in a hospital bed is masterful: red blood yields to white sheets, and the woman who was vertical in horror is now limply recumbent. The horizontal calm of this shot—the glacial sheets sloping up to her head turned towards the wall, that neutral wall filling out the upper part of the frame—is like a reproach to the bustle and panic of the preceding scene. From here on, Julia seems to carry the stunned blankness of those hospital sheets wherever she goes. Though she may be touched by the kindness of friends or frightened by evil, nothing will ever be able to thaw the ice deep within her.

Fleeing from her husband to a house in Kensington, Julia is disturbed by poltergeists: odd creaks, disembodied footsteps, an erratic window frame, an electric room heater

that can switch itself on, oppressive smells. Magnus' sister (Jill Bennett) arranges a seance in Julia's house (the script isn't clear why), and the medium has a terrifying vision of a little boy being killed. Julia herself, on a nearby playground, has visions of a little girl who resembles her own dead child. Back in the '30s, she learns, this youngster died under mysterious circumstances in Julia's Kensington home.

Obsessed, Julia turns detective. She unravels the story of Olivia, a beautiful, evil little girl who taught her playmates sadism—sadism that started with the torture of animals and finished with the killing and mutilation of a German boy on the playground. As Julia digs deeper, people around her begin to die: one of Olivia's playmates, now middle-aged, falls down a stairwell, Magnus is disposed of by a fall (push?) down a flight of steps and Julia's friend Mark (Tom Conti) meets with another fatal accident. Olivia's mother (Cathleen Nesbitt), whom Julia finds in a country asylum, confesses that she murdered her daughter for the playground killing. Then she gleefully taunts Julia for killing her own child. The accusing face of Olivia seems to stare out of Julia's, and the old woman expires of heart failure.

When Julia returns home, the ghost of Olivia finally presents itself. Julia, sitting in a large armchair, makes comforting, motherly overtures to the little demon playing with a sharp metallic toy on her floor. The camera pans behind Julia's chair, obscuring our view of the confrontation. We hear a dull sound. Julia comes back into camera view. Her throat has been cut. There is an expression of calm acceptance on her face. She has died as her daughter died, at the hands of her daughter's lookalike.

What we have in this film is something truly sinister: a guilt-ridden mother, seeking contact with the daughter whose death she feels responsible for, meets not with forgiveness from beyond the grave but with a death sentence. Julia's dramatic journey (through interviews with those connected with Olivia) is towards acceptance of her guilt and her need to expiate it at Olivia's hands. Of course, Julia was only trying to save her daughter's life, so the sentence she accepts is unfair and irrational. But that is another sinister thing about this film: it portrays a triumph of morbid remorse over the will to live.

Olivia does her own kind of interviewing as Julia does hers, visiting death upon five people in the course of the film. Three of these murders take place not in the house dominated by the evil spirit, but in various parts of London. This is the clumsiest element in the film. As I noted above, supernatural evil is more convincing if it's concentrated in one

spot. Peripatetic ghosts don't convince. When, for example, Olivia pays her murderous respects on Mark, and the camera represents her point-of-view as she walks to his Chelsea flat, I couldn't help wondering if she was consulting a street map or had asked a bobby for directions.

The heart attack given to Cathleen Nesbitt was better managed, but this involved momentary demonic possession (shown by Olivia's eyes staring out of Julia's face) and is a rather strong element to introduce so late in the film.

I suspect that Loncraine and Humphries felt some trepidation about letting the supernatural roam so wide. So they tried to compensate with atmosphere: London is portrayed as a murderous playground. In this film, every child (except Julia's daughter) is made to seem a potential agent of evil. After tense scenes, there are shock cuts to children laughing or screaming at play. Loncraine keeps a sense of evil hovering in the air; if all London is a place of childish corruption, then Olivia may strike at any time. But this device carries its own defect: by comparison, the haunted house ceases to feel particularly haunted.

Indeed, Loncraine is better at portraying seedy flats and desolate street-corners than the conventional spookiness of the haunted Kensington house, which he explores cursorily. He delivers its frights with off-screen noises and close-ups of the actors reacting to them. Hackneyed devices like Julia screaming at the sudden sight of herself in a mirror are also employed. Loncraine probably was bored by these tricks before he even got on the set, or at least he should have been.

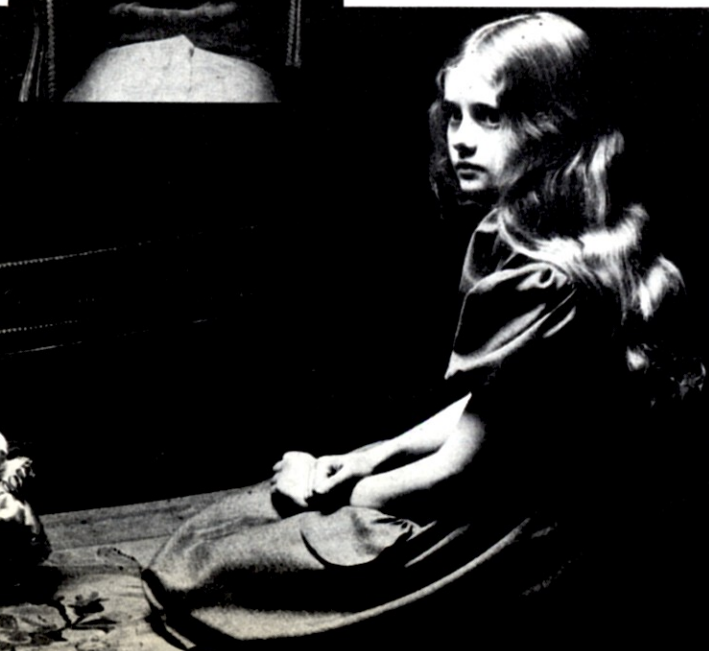
Of the actors, Keir Dullea is a disaster, but the other performers are fine, particularly 87-year-old Cathleen Nesbitt and Edward Hardwick as an uncooperative witness. Mia Farrow, though she's not an actress of range or power, is perfect as Julia. She carries her ghosts around inside her. Her aloofness seems a convincing issue of the tragedy she repeatedly rehearses within her heart.

In the middle of the film, Julia is awakened at night by something scratching at her bedroom door. Knowing that there is a ghost in her house, and already guessing this ghost is that of a homicidal child, she matter-of-factly calls out, "Don't be afraid," and then goes back to sleep. Farrow fills this moment with calm acceptance of malevolence as something that can be lived with and even pitied, as something that irrationally belongs to her life.

I carried this moment home from the theater and pondered it at odd moments during the night. My bedroom became a haunted annex of Julia's house. The best moments of horror movies have a long, disconcerting reach. **by Richard Alleva**



Mia Farrow (left) embraces her ghost child (Samantha Gates), and death.



SHORT NOTICES

THE FOX AND THE HOUND



AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON

Written and directed by John Landis. Universal Pictures. 8/81. In color. With: David Naughton, Griffin Dunne, Jenny Agutter, John Woodvine.

The fine blend of horror and comedy director John Landis achieves in the first hour is all but negated by an incredibly disappointing second half. David Naughton and Griffin Dunne are hitchhiking their way across Europe, sauntering through the dreary English countryside telling each other knock-knock jokes, accompanied by a soulful version of *Blue Moon*, when they arrive at the wrong place at the wrong time. Dunne is killed and Naughton hospitalized by an attack from a werewolf. How do we know it's a werewolf? Because Dunne keeps showing up—looking pretty ragged but keeping his sense of humor even in death—trying to convince Naughton that he must kill himself to end the "blood line" of the wolf. It's a great start, but Landis seems to lose his edge as the full moon approaches and the inevitable transformation begins.

Yes, Rick Baker's makeup is probably better than Rob Bottin's work in *THE HOWLING*, if only more complete. But Landis' decision to shoot the scene with bright lighting is a mistake; skin shouldn't shine the way rubber does. Staging it when Naughton is alone also robs impact. Without someone cowering in horror, we're not sure whether to cringe or giggle as we see bones elongate and hair grow furiously. I giggled.

Perhaps the film's grimmest scenes have nothing to do with werewolves at all, but are the series of car crashes caused by the werewolf's appearance on the London streets. The crushed, maimed and bloody bodies pile up, but I kept waiting for Elwood and Joliet Jake to walk away singing *Blue Moon* one more time.

Michael Kaplan

BLOW OUT

Written and directed by Brian DePalma. A Filmways release of a George Litto production. In color, scope and Dolby stereo. 110 minutes. With: John Travolta, Nancy Allen, John Lithgow, Dennis Franz, Peter Boyden.

DePalma's tangled tribute to Antonioni—with a pinch of Coppola's *THE CONVERSATION*, a swig of

Pakula's *PARALLAX VIEW* and a dash of Chappaquiddick—is as fiercely unHitchcockian as it is acidly self-deflating. Travolta plays a sound effects technician who, while recording owl hoots and creepy winds for a horror movie, accidentally records the assassination of a Presidential candidate. After the candidate's car careens off a bridge and sinks in a river, Travolta swims to the rescue and saves Nancy Allen (in another cute hooker-type role concocted by her hubby), whose presence inside the car becomes the loose thread in the unravelling of a vast political conspiracy. DePalma has opted for straight suspense and almost no blood. While his restraint is commendable, his excess elsewhere erupts in the usual froth of split-screens, slow-motion and overlush lighting. But this is almost forgivable, considering that DePalma has given *BLOW-OUT* the first smooth, functional and hauntingly meaningful *denouement* of his career, which marks a certain creative triumph for him.

Tim Lucas

COLD CUTS

Directed by Bertrand Blier. Screened at Filmex 3/81 (© 1979). 95 minutes. In color. French, with subtitles. With: Gerard Depardieu, Bernard Blier, Genevieve Page.

This very black comedy would seem even funnier, were not its underlying subject—a logical extension of the present climate of random, senseless violence—so downright grim. After *FEMMES FATALES* and *GET OUT YOUR HANDKERCHIEF*, Blier was accused of being a misogynist, and now many will see him as an all-around misanthrope. In truth, he is a deadpan satirist whose powers of observation are both telling and convincing. The characters who populate his bleak yet comfortable urban landscape have scant understanding of why they feel compelled to snuff each other, and why they do it so passionlessly—without even so much as a raised eyebrow. For his part, Blier prefers to chronicle the situation rather than attempt to explain it. At one point, pondering what aspects of modern life have driven men mad, Gerard Depardieu muses, "Maybe it's all the concrete..." referring to the highways and anonymous high

rises. Maybe. Go ahead and laugh, but this one will put ice crystals in your veins the way damn few horror films ever can.

Jordan R. Fox

CONDORMAN

Directed by Charles Jarrot. Walt Disney Productions. 7/81. 97 minutes. In color. With: Michael Crawford, Oliver Reed, Barbara Carrera.

Disney's attempt at combining the James Bond and *SUPERMAN* formulas is a mess, a melange of Maxwell Smart and the television version of *BATMAN*, but even that is giving it more credit than it deserves. Comic artist Woody Wilkins (Crawford) gets accidentally recruited by the CIA and finds himself helping a beautiful KGB agent (Carrera) escape. Even the obligatory exotic locations can't save the simplistic story, and it's as unfunny as it is unadventurous. Disney's reply will doubtless be that they make their films for children. Really? I can't even see a five-year-old being fooled by the wires in the flying sequences. Michael Crawford cashes in on his bumbling British television sit-com character Frank Spencer, but as this has no relevance whatsoever outside the U.K., what's the point? Only Oliver Reed as a malevolent Russian and Barbara Carrera as the typical "Bond girl" go slightly towards redeeming this errant nonsense.

Alan Jones

DEAD AND BURIED

Directed by Gary A. Sherman. Avco-Embassy. 6/81. 92 minutes. In color. With: James Farentino, Melody Anderson, Jack Albertson, Dennis Redfield, Nancy Locke Hauser.

This is a cut-and-paste stinker made without a shred of skill or conviction. While the film avoids the clichés of the contemporary slash-and-stalk cycle, it returns to older clichés, sacrificing believable, sympathetic characters, dramatic logic and satisfying shocks for a questionable recycling job.

A stupid sheriff (Farentino) in an isolated village is humored by his perfect, loving wife (Anderson) and the unfazed populace as he tries to solve two gruesome, unexplained murders. His nemesis, the crazy old coroner Dobbs (Albertson) is of no help, and later we discover why: Dobbs has been busy mixing his mortician's magic with voodoo to create an army of zombies. The dead townfolk kill and disfigure any stranger in town, and give them to Dobbs so he can "make them new" again.

While the ads tout writers Ronald Shusett and Dan O'Bannon as "the creators of *ALIEN*," the whole of *DEAD & BURIED* fails to match any 30 seconds of *ALIEN*. Outside of Stan Winston's inventive makeup effects—which include a hypodermic needle jabbed into the eye of a struggling burn victim—the film is a mess. Gary Sherman's (*RAW MEAT*) visual imagination is flat and dull, a distillation of bits and pieces of other films: smoke and backlighting from

ALIEN, a decaying face from Philip Kaufman's *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, the army of zombies from *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*, and the gore of *FRIDAY THE 13th*.

Ray Pride

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Directed by John Glen. United Artists release. In color, scope and Dolby Stereo. 6/81. 127 minutes. With: Roger Moore, Carole Bouquet, Topol, Lynn-Holly Johnson, Julian Glover.

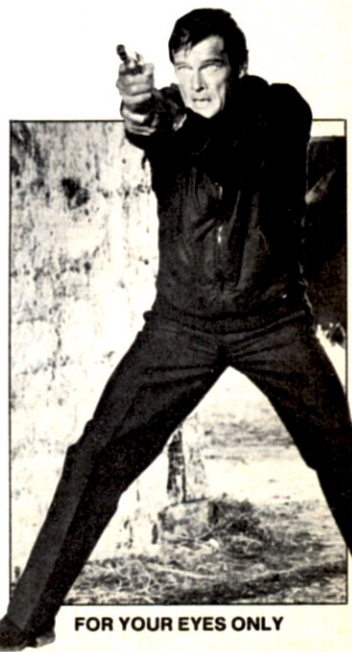
Less fantastic and far more palatable than recent offerings is this twelfth in the James Bond series and the fifth featuring Roger Moore who, as he grows older, is at least looking a bit human. John Glen, promoted from second-unit chores on *MOONRAKER*, directs with a kinetic flair not seen since the earliest Connery films. The script, by Michael Wilson and series veteran Richard Maibaum, is interpreted with economy and visual savvy, as Bond searches for a stolen missile guidance system, running afoul of Greek dope smugglers, the KGB, even homicidal hockey players. Sexual interest, happily minimized, is aptly provided by sultry Carole Bouquet; especially engaging is Lynn-Holly Johnson as a sprightly figure skater with aspirations for the Olympics and Bond's bod. Though budgeted in the \$25 million range, the picture wisely involves itself more with characters than overblown situations. Producer Cubby Broccoli has come to his senses, and no longer seems dedicated to assaulting ours.

Tim Lucas

THE FOX AND THE HOUND

Directed by Art Stevens, Ted Berman & Richard Rich. Walt Disney Productions. 6/81. 83 minutes. With the voices of: Mickey Rooney, Kurt Russell, Pearl Bailey, Jack Albertson, Sandy Duncan.

The twentieth cartoon feature from the Disney organization demon-



FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

strates the studio's dominance in the field, but it's a dominance that may be threatened by a host of competitors on the horizon. Although the Xerox methods used for animation nowadays precludes the smooth, now-days lines of the classic films of the '30s and '40s, the \$12 million budget has provided the best in animation today. The story of an orphaned fox and a young pup whose friendship overcomes their natural roles is supplemented by several subplots and conflicts, all of which are nicely resolved at the fade-out. While the film seems longer than its 83-minute running time, the rousing climax offers excitement and artistry which will be hard to match, let alone surpass, by upcoming animated efforts. This is a pleasant but undynamic film which carries on a tradition, but doesn't break any new ground.

Dan Scapperotti

GREAT MUPPET CAPER

Directed by Jim Hensen. A Universal AFD release, 6 81, 95 minutes. In color and Dolby Stereo. With the Muppet Performers: Jim Hensen, Frank Oz, Dave Goelz, and Charles Grodin, Diana Rigg, John Cleese, Robert Morley, Peter Falk, Jack Warden.

Although their first movie mopped up for Lord Grade, for my money, you can add *The Muppets* to the lost list of television supernovas who don't quite cut it on the big screen. As loveable, satirical and beautifully animated as *The Muppets* are, the big screen and (to date) little scripts haven't helped to camouflage the essentially one-note characterizations provided them by their creators. The film trips up for many of the same reasons that the first Muppet film did, including the television-bound format which insists on using "guest stars" for cameos. This time around, the cameos are mercifully fewer, but those by Robert Morley and Peter Falk create just as much down time as did earlier ones by Mel Brooks and Madeline Kahn. There's also the frequent embarrassment of spotting the wires and mechanics, try as one might to look the other way.

The story revolves around the theft of Diana Rigg's famed "Baseball Diamond," but provides little more than new vehicles for the Muppets to get around in (hot air balloons, bikes, motorcycles, buses), and bridges from one dreary tune to the next. The Muppets themselves, of course, are

magical beings, and in several scenes everything *does* come together, including a spectacular Esther Williams nautical ballet, replete with Roman candles, aquachorines and a high-dive finale from a certain porcine sex symbol. But there's little here that the critters haven't already accomplished on television. It's the old, old story: *loved* them, but not the movie.

Stephen Rebello

MOTHER'S DAY

Directed by Charles Kaufman. United Film Distributors release, 9 80, 93 minutes. In color. With: Nancy Henderson, Deborah Luce, Tiana Pierce, Holden McGuire, Rose Ross.

This first feature for director co-writer Charles Kaufman tries like hell to lift itself from the current slew of explicit horror films. A trio of crazies, two sons and their batty mom (wonderfully played by Rose Ross, a sort of female Roberts Blossom) kidnap and terrorize a trio of young women who are camping out in the boonies for their annual college reunion.

Though gore abounds, the film works best in its quieter, non-explicit moments. Among the film's finer attributes is the greasily cluttered, almost satirical design of the homestead from which the crazies hail, similar in ways to *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE*. The family exhibits a goofy, debased set of middle-class values and material accouterments: one of the TV sets constantly blaring in the house is eventually used as a murder weapon.

The film also manages to alter the tired and sexist women-in-jeopardy formula. After one of their group dies from torture and rape, the two remaining women forge themselves into a tough guerilla force, return to the dreaded house and destroy the psychos. Whatever the moral value—one of the villains gets a hatchet in the balls—this action strikes a metaphorical blow in the right direction. I suppose the *female* psycho preying on helpless, hapless, shriveling men is just around the corner, and *that* could be a fine movie indeed.

David Bartholomew

THE NESTING

Directed by Armand Weston. Feature Films Distributing release. In color, 5 81, 104 minutes. With: Robin Groves, John Carradine, Gloria Grahame, Christopher Loomis, Michael David Lally.

Armand Weston, whose main contribution to film has been in the

porno field (where he garnered several awards), has produced and directed a low-budget thriller which surprisingly is *not* an exploitative vehicle depending on blood and gore, although there *are* a couple of grisly murders. Robin Groves plays a novelist suffering from agoraphobia (the fear of leaving one's house), who acts as the catalyst to a gothic story of revenge from the grave. While trying to find the cause of her phobia, Groves discovers a rare octagonal mansion, which although she has never before seen, has been perfectly described in her latest book. The Victorian house is a link with a 1940s brothel and the answer to her abnormal behavior. Originally slated for release as *PHOBIA* (the title was changed due to a conflict with a John Huston film awaiting release), the film is an interesting and imaginative little thriller which makes the most of its limited budget.

Dan Scapperotti

THE PHOENIX

Directed by Douglas Hickox. ABC-Television, 4 20 81, 90 minutes. In color. With: Judson Scott, Fernando Allende, E. G. Marshall, Shelly Smith, Daryl Anderson.

Recognizing its obligation to grant reply time to responsible spokesmen, ABC gives 90 minutes to an "ancient astronaut" to tell us what's wrong with mankind. The result is a science fiction-fantasy-action-adventure-drama mish-mash that is remarkably free of long sermons, but also remarkably free of intelligent entertainment.

A dumbbell-shaped sarcophagus is discovered at a Central American archeological dig. Inside, scientists find a blonde, pectorally-perfect creature named Benu (Judson Scott), who likes to swim in the nude, blow up cars and complain about pollution, air conditioning and "positive ions." Benu is supposed to be a superbeing, worshipped by ancient beings as a god, but he comes across as a typical Californian. Scott and the other actors handle their roles with admirable sincerity, but they can't subdue the absurd and unoriginal plot. The movie tries to say something important about humanity, ecology and solar power. If the message is a bit difficult to understand, it could be due to a script that was left out in the sun too long.

Christopher Martin

THE PROWLER

Directed by Joseph Zito. Sandhurst Corporation release, 6 81, 91 minutes. In color. With: Vicki Dawson, Christopher Goutman, Cindy Weintraub, Laurence Tierney, Farley Granger.

Shot in Cape May, New Jersey, as *THE GRADUATION*, this latest chapter in the Tom Savini *oeuvre* stands out as perhaps his most successful non-Romero film to date. The plot, which retraces the now-compulsory *FRIDAY THE 13TH* clichés, surrounds a 1980 graduation dance—the first in 35 years, when a graduate couple were murdered on the bandstand—and a pitchfork-toting loonie disguised in an Army costume.

Director Joseph Zito avoids the dance itself to isolate his characters



THE NESTING

and develop some genuinely suspenseful situations. Add to this a sharply mocking use of editing, a fresh score (in that it owes to James Bernard what other splatter films owe to Bernard Herrman) and some fascinatingly odd supporting roles, and the result is a rare bird, indeed—a film so self-deprecating in its outlook that it can only regard its own exploitative nature with good humor. Savini's effects include a startling trick involving a bayonet and a man's head, a woman combed-over in her shower by a pitchfork and a better-than-usual exploding head. While it isn't as strenuous as *MANIAC*, it's certainly as graphic—which proves that an R-rating can still be had by independent gore producers with friends in high places.

Tim Lucas

SCREAMERS

Directed by Dan T. Miller. New World Pictures release, 5 81. In color. With Barbara Bach, Richard Johnson, Charles Cass, Cameron Mitchell, Joseph Cotten, Mel Ferrer.

The misleading title and vein-popping ads for this cheesy Anglo-Italian period piece were obviously designed to trick people into thinking they're getting David Cronenberg's *SCANNERS*. The opening segment, where-in treasure-looting guest stars Cameron Mitchell and Mel Ferrer are dispatched by drooling, lightning-fast cave creatures, has nothing whatsoever to do with what follows, and was probably tacked on later to remind viewers of *ALIEN*'s beastie.

Once you cut away the freak-show hype ("Be Warned: You Will Actually See A Man Turned Inside Out!"), you have an inept hybrid of *ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU* and *CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON* with Richard Johnson as top dog on an uncharted island. Abetted by mad biologist Joseph Cotten and his comely daughter Barbara Bach, Johnson transforms islanders into mutant men-fish who do deep-sea salvage work on the nearby Lost Continent of Atlantis. Eventually, stock footage of an erupting volcano lets everyone off the hook. Makeup artist Chris Walas' hulking gill-men are strictly of the zipper-up-the-back variety.

Glenn Lovell

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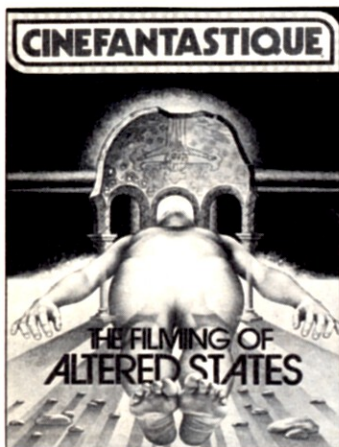
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LETTERS



THEY WERE THE BEST OF REVIEWS; THEY WERE THE WORST OF REVIEWS

I certainly respect that CINEFANTASTIQUE does—and must—give full freedom of expression to its critics, but my, oh my, does that freedom ever make for bizarre bedfellows.

In Volume 11 Number 2, for example, Paul Sammon mentions "slipshod traveling mattes" in SUPERMAN II, but Tim Lucas ignores some of the worst matte lines in the history of the movies in CLASH OF THE TITANS. David Hogan searches desperately through FRIDAY THE 13TH—PART II for Steve Miner's talent, but David Bartholomew throws away THE BURNING in 100 words, even though Tony Maylam's direction is miles beyond Miner's. And we have Joseph Francavilla's loathsome rip-job on EXCALIBUR. Even disliking the movie, I should think he would admit to a measure of beauty, humor and poetry in the film. Evidently, one of his prime objections was that something is wrong with the armor. Armor, for God's sake! Give me a break.

I would never suggest that the editor censor his critics. But a little editorial muscle is required at times: in the choice of critics, in guidelines for critics, perhaps in the offering of second opinions. CINEFANTASTIQUE is showing disquieting signs of mutating into another of those snobbish, esoteric film mags with only three objectives: finding quality in bad movies, trashing good movies, and stroking pet filmmakers.

Richard Pruitt
Jeffersonville, Indiana

You cry and moan about the empty nature of most genre films, but then casually dismiss films of great significance for the most trivial of reasons. Such inconsistency undermines your credibility. We're not seeing an objective, critical analysis, but a crapshoot, with the judgements of the reviews resting not on the quality of the film

but on the individual tastes and opinions of whichever writers happen to get whichever assignments. Frankly, it's hard to take CINEFANTASTIQUE's reviews very seriously.

Steve Biodrowski
El Monte, California

Last issue we printed 17 reviews, by 11 different writers, ranging in length from 110 to 1,250 words. Even trying to maintain a consistent critical perspective would be ludicrous. Frankly, we don't even try. Our review section reflects the views of our writers, which as you've probably noticed, vary widely. We've encouraged this wide diversity of opinion among our writers—even we don't always agree with every review printed—and tend to flex our editorial muscle only sparingly.

DON'T SHOOT THAT POOCH!

I must take issue with filmmakers on the misrepresentation of animals in the movies. A good deal of the public is somewhat impressionable and less than adequately informed concerning many species of animals and I am concerned that many people will correlate the behavior of werewolves—as seen in THE HOWLING and the upcoming AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON—with the behavior of real wolves, a truly majestic animal.

The wolf is high on the list of misunderstood and persecuted animals. Despite myths asserting the wolf to be vicious, the wolf is actually an extremely timid animal (they will never approach a human in the wild), gentle (they kill only for food, and never attack people), loyal to their pride, unrelentingly protective and responsible to their offspring. This beautiful, intelligent and gentle animal has received an unwarranted reputation, and filmmakers should employ a modicum of responsibility to help overcome this problem.

In a movie as intelligent as THE HOWLING, a disclaimer stating that the behavior of werewolves in no way reflects upon the behavior of wolves would go a long way. It could come anywhere—a line of dialogue, or a short disclaimer right before or during the credits. A very small amount of responsibility, concern and a very small action on the part of filmmakers would be a big step in doing a great service for the wolf and many other animals!

Ron Sadowsky
Board of Directors
Animal Rights Coalition, Inc.
Willernie, Minnesota

ALTERED TASTES

You have now devoted the bulk of two issues of CINEFANTASTIQUE to ALTERED STATES. Enough, already. In fact, far too much for the

most overrated film of the past decade. The majority of the articles were spent on things that weren't in the final version, and why they were left out. I submit that it doesn't matter how many suits Dick Smith had to redesign, or how many hallucination scenes were cut out, or why Arthur Penn and John Dykstra were dismissed.

What did end up on the screen was bad filmmaking: poor pacing, no plot, random images and cardboard characters. And the finale is asinine and simplistic to the point of absurdity. After 100 minutes of pretentious hooey about finding the Ultimate Truth, we discover that all screenwriter Paddy Chayefsky and director Ken Russell are trying to tell us is what Lennon and McCartney said more succinctly and far more eloquently in All You Need Is Love. Frankly, give me—in your words—the "empty-headed genre films" over ALTERED STATES any time. They're far more entertaining and far less pretentious.

David Gordon
Arlington, Virginia

ALRIGHT ALREADY! WE ADMIT IT, TOO!

I would just like to clarify a misconception that might arise from my remarks in Alan Jones' interview with me about AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON [11:28]. I did not intend to suggest that JAWS and ALIEN are bad movies—just that they are illogical. In fact, I consider JAWS to be one of the great monster movies of all time.

My only other comment on the piece is to ask why you would feel the need to state, "The director admits the film conforms to the classic monster genre..." I find the use of the word "admits" disturbing, as I was not "admitting" anything. The movie does conform to the classic monster genre. I state this. I claim this. I like this! Your editorial slant is rather bizarre for a magazine "admitting" to a "sense of wonder."

John Landis
Twickenham, England

CORRECTION:

Greg Jein will not be handling the miniature work on Ridley Scott's BLADE RUNNER, as reported last issue. "I was scheduled to be the miniature designer starting in February, 1981," Jein told us, "but Francis Ford Coppola's ONE FROM THE HEART didn't make the scheduled wrap date of January 25. In fact, I won't be off until the end of June."

Credit for the miniatures should instead be given to Mark Stetson, whose prior credits include CE3K—THE SPECIAL EDITION, STAR TREK—TMP and ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK. We regret our error.

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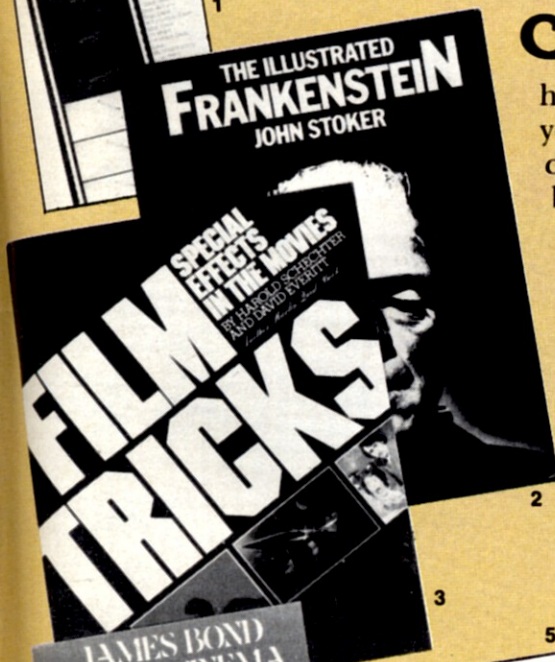
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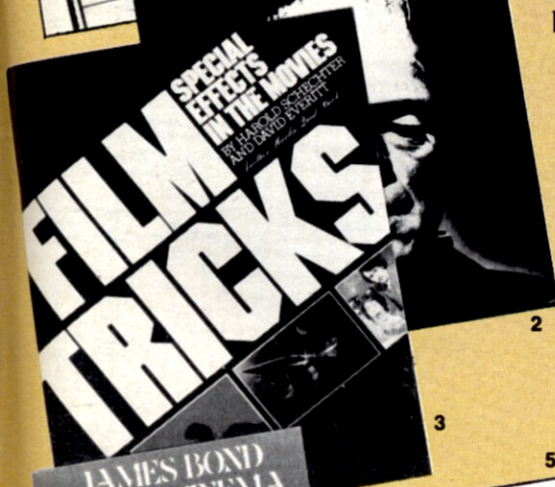
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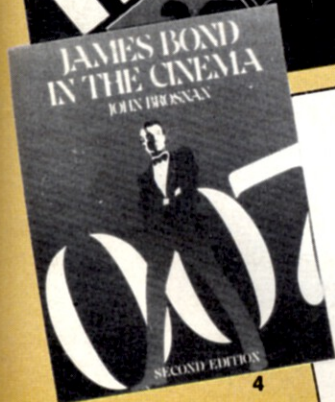
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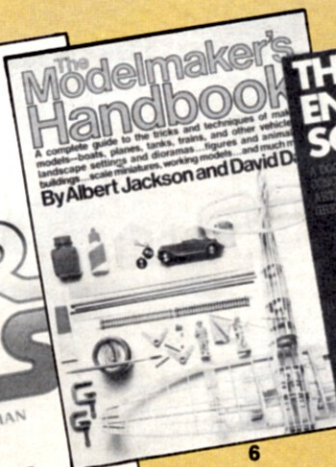
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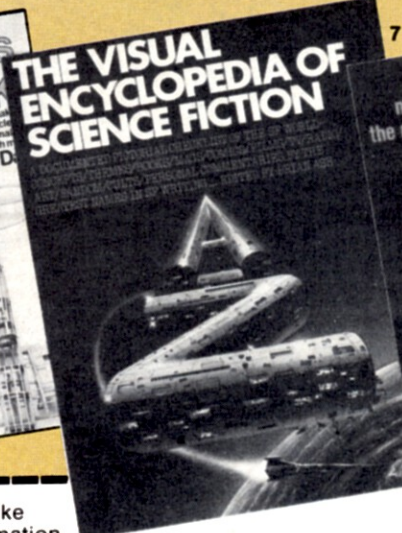
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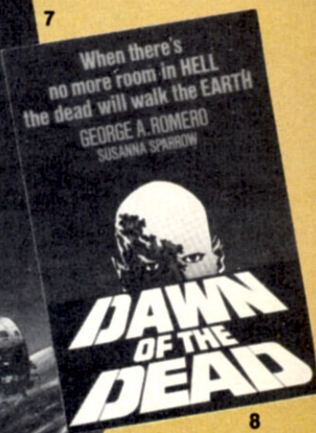
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